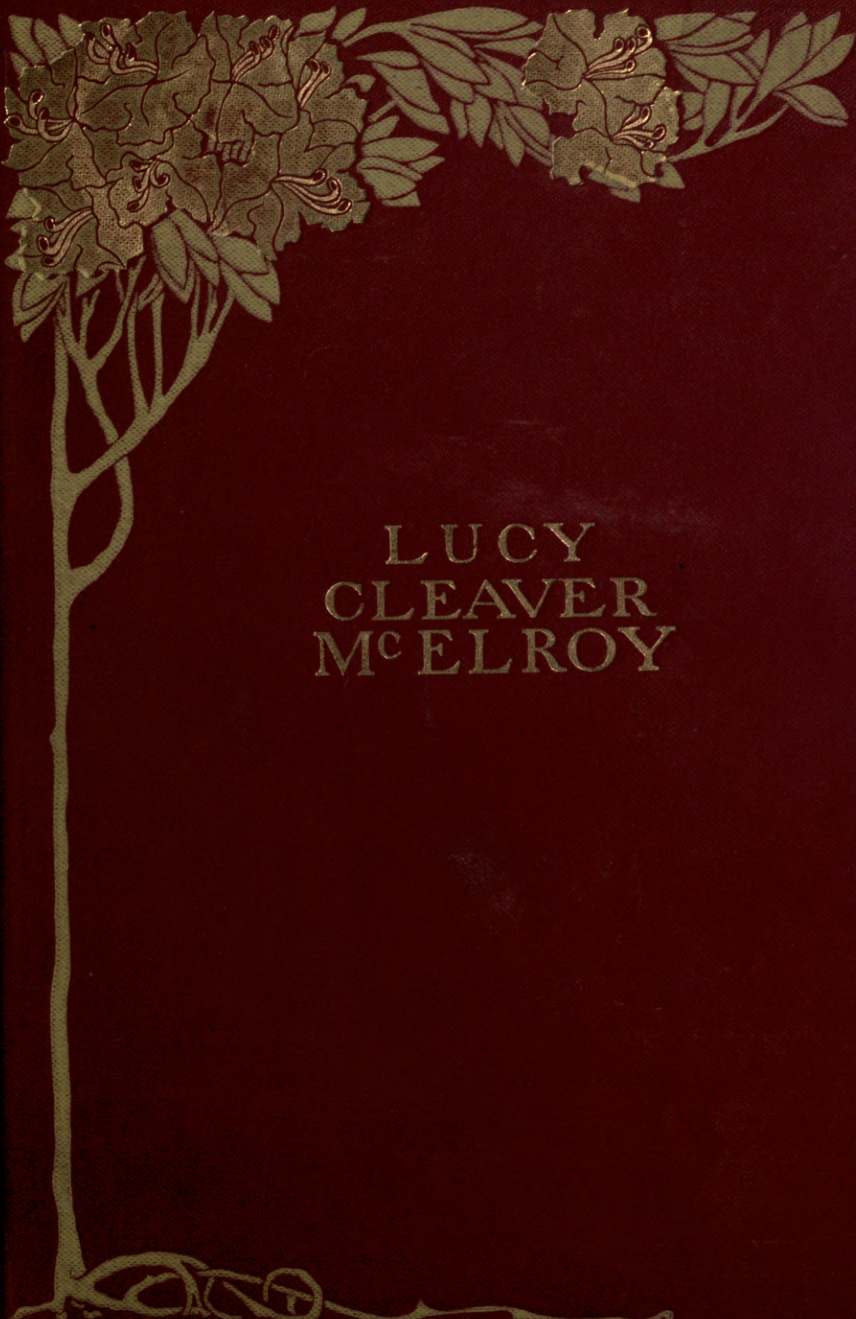
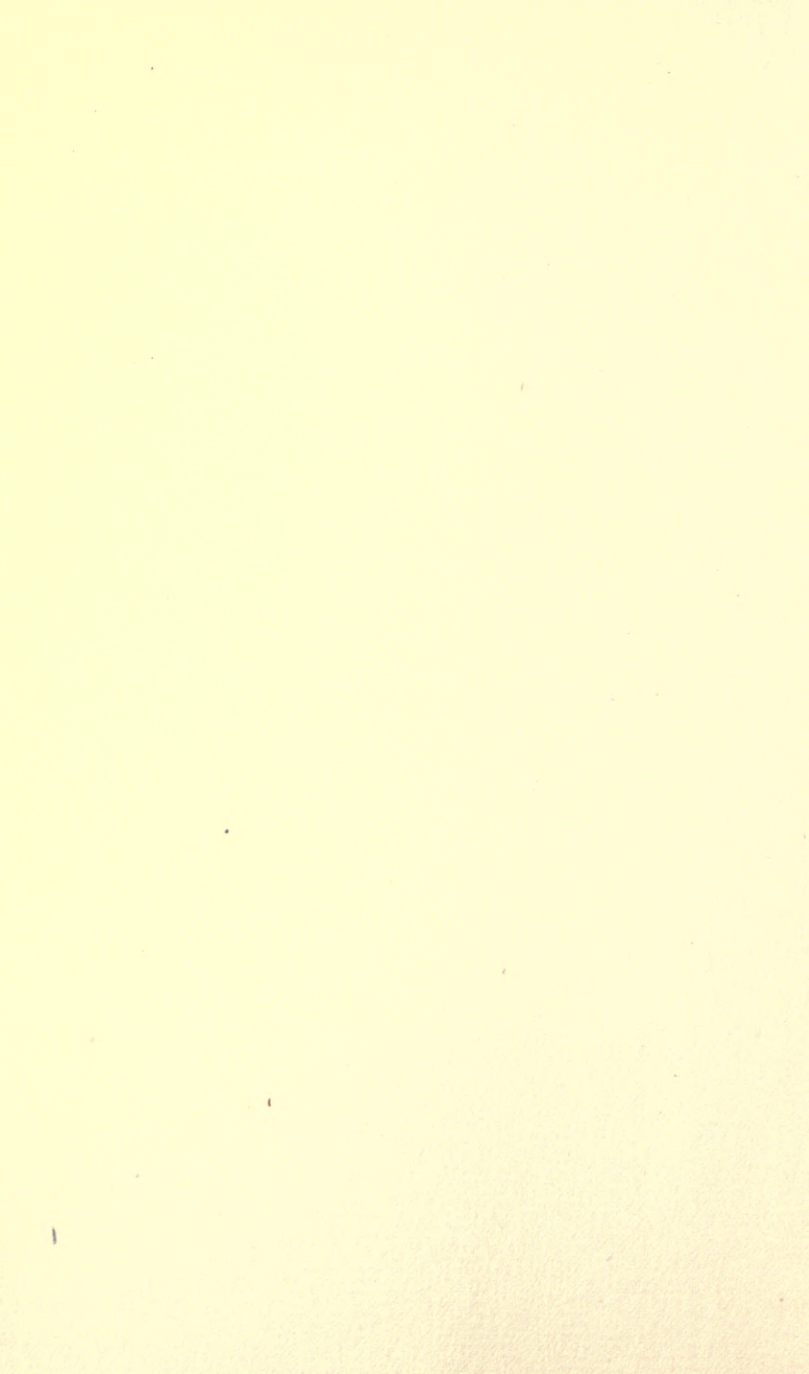


JULETTY



LUCY
CLEAVER
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E. A. Bruce





JULETTY



W.E. MEARS—

JULETTY

*A STORY OF....
OLD KENTUCKY*

BY
LUCY CLEAVER McELROY



NEW YORK
THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.
PUBLISHERS

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ALLOW ME,

My Dear Father,

To dedicate to you—the embodiment
of all Kentucky excellences—this little
story of Kentucky life,

YOUR DAUGHTER,

L. C. M.

Contents

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|--|------|
| I. IN THE PENNYRILE | 11 |
| II. IN WHICH I SNUFF THE WIND | 25 |
| III. IN WHICH I FIND OTHER GAME . . . | 43 |
| IV. IN WHICH I WIN ONE GAME | 61 |
| V. IN WHICH I HEAR PERSONAL REMINIS- CENCES OF A PENNYRILE BATTLE . . | 83 |
| VI. IN WHICH THE GAME TRAPS THE HUNTER. | 119 |
| VII. IN WHICH I JOIN A MAN HUNT . . . | 131 |
| VIII. IN WHICH FIRST BLOOD IS DRAWN . . | 151 |
| IX. IN WHICH "BUDDY" PROVES GAME . . | 171 |
| X. IN WHICH HUNTER AND GAME ARE SNARED | 185 |
| XI. IN WHICH I THINK THE GAME WELL WORTH THE CANDLE | 213 |

Contents

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|---|------|
| XII. IN WHICH I TURN FOX HUNTER . . . | 223 |
| XIII. IN WHICH THE GAME IS TAKEN RED- HANDED | 249 |
| XIV. IN WHICH THE DISTILLER RECEIVES A LIFE SENTENCE | 269 |

List of Illustrations

DRAWINGS BY W. E. MEARS

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| "HE LOWERED HIS RIFLE" | <i>Frontispiece</i> |
| | FACING PAGE |
| THE PENNYRILE DISTRICT | 20 |
| THE BLACKSMITH SHOP | 34 |
| "I AROSE AND WALKED TO THE DOOR AND LOOKED OUT UPON THE NIGHT" | 38 |
| JULETTY AMONG THE VINES | 48 |
| THE JUG STUMP | 51 |
| "YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, JULETTY: HOL' ONTER YER PUMMEL" | 80 |
| MYRTLEDENE | 86 |
| "THAR SHE IS" | 122 |
| A MAN HUNT | 144 |
| "MID THE SILENCE OF THE WOODLAND THE MEN STOOD MOTIONLESS" | 148 |

List 'of Illustrations

| | FACING PAGE |
|--|-------------|
| BUDDY'S WAGON | 162 |
| "A HEAVY BEAM FROM THE CABIN ROOF LAY ACROSS HIS CHEST" | 216 |
| THE FOX HUNT | 228 |
| OLD BUCK, PREACHER | 235 |
| "JERRY, TAKE A PLANK OUT OF THE FLOOR THERE" | 262 |

CHAPTER I

In the Pennyrile

CHAPTER I

IN THE PENNYRILE

"THAR, dam yer!

"Take thet, an' nex' time doncher be so dam smart!"

The words were passionate enough, but they were uttered in the cool drawl of the Kentucky mountaineer.

When I heard them I was leaning idly in the doorway of a little Mount Vernon drug-store; across the street, immediately in front of the open court-house, stood the speaker, a mountain man clad in brown jeans, coarse boots, and slouch hat.

His inevitable rifle was at his shoulder, and I judged by his aim that he meant murder for some one in my vicinity, so I glanced about me for the offender.

Bang!! Puff!

A tiny line of smoke drifted lazily from the muzzle of his gun.

Juletty

Instinctively, but unconsciously, my left hand grasped my right elbow, though my eyes were still on the mountaineer.

He lowered his rifle, dropped the empty smoking hull, with rattle and snap slipped a fresh one in place, and stood looking uncertainly forward, ready for a second shot if expedient.

I stood there half smiling at the man's coolness, till a warm moisture attracted my attention to my fingers, which I found dripping blood; then for the first time I knew I had been shot.

Simultaneously with the discovery a great pain enveloped me as in a shroud, and there rose in my heart the hot, helpless rage of the innocent bystander who has stopped another man's bullet; I had never seen the mountaineer before, so of course he had not meant the shot for me. My right arm hung useless beside me, but with my left hand I managed to secure my revolver from my hip pocket, and lunging toward him I fired shot after shot at the tall, gaunt, awkward figure striding up the opposite street, never hastening nor even looking back.

In the Pennyrile

My aim was uncertain because of the gray mist that in the last few minutes seemed to have settled everywhere; in fact, all things were against me, for suddenly the very pavement arose and smote me in the face.

"Jim Whiter shot 'im; I knowed 'e'd do it."

"Me too; I been erspectin' it for er couple er days. I cain't think whut he waited so long fer." This was in a tone of mild wonder and reproach; then the speaker added: "Doc says 'e wont never have good use er thet arm no mo'; nothin' but er little bit er hole, nother. But some folks takes things pow'ful hard."

The doctor's verdict and the sneer roused me, and I struggled up to find I had been removed from that treacherous pavement to the hard bed in my room, and my wound dressed; the big, hearty doctor sat beside me and urged me to be still, but I wanted to appear as indifferent as I knew those men would in my place, so sat up and asked carelessly:

"Who was that fool fellow shooting at anyway?"

A roar of laughter followed, and some one said:

Juletty

“By hell! you air er greenhorn! Doncher know Jim done it er purpose?”

“Why, man, thet still yer raided day fore yis-tiddy wuz Jim’s sister’s brother-in-law’s still, an’ er cose he felt boun’ an’ compelled ter git even with yer some way. He could er killed yer jes ez easy ez fallin’ off er log, but he didn’ want ter. So’s he didn’ want ter do thet he jes put ’is mark on yer fer life; Jim’s er gittin’ tender hearterder ever year uv his life; ’e’ll git so arter er while he won’t kill nothin’.”

The man sighed, regretful for Jim’s weakness.

“Heaven help the victims of his tenderness!” I said. “But I must see him at once; I wish to talk with him. A thing like this is monstrous. I shall get right up from here, and go around to the jail and interview him.”

“Jail!”

“Jim in jail!!”

“God, man, you’re clean crazy; nobody ain’t er goin’ ter tackle Jim when he’s got blood in his eye. ’Sides thet, he’s home by now, and the devil and all his artillery cain’t oust him fum thar.”

“Oh, hell! Jim in jail!”

In the Pennyrile

It was true; though marshal, sheriff, and men in large numbers had stood within twenty steps of the man at the time of the shooting, not one had lifted his hand to detain him, and he had quietly walked to his horse at the rear of the temple of law and order, mounted, and with his death-dealing rifle across his lap, ridden slowly out of town.

This the big mountain doctor told me after he had administered an opiate, and driven the men from my room.

He then drew the blinds, arranged my pillows comfortably, and seated himself beside the bed.

"How long you been in the mountains, Mr. Burton?"

"Only a few weeks."

"Ah, now your mistake about that shot is accounted for; a very natural mistake, understand me; had you been here longer you would have known that a United States marshal, like yourself, is always more or less likely to be a target for a mountaineer's rifle. We are law-abiding citizens, understand me, but when a man interferes with our business he is pretty certain to hear something go off. It is

Juletty

a sense of honor, sir, understand me ; the law must not stand between a man and his personal enemy."

He was talking in a monotone against time, and I knew he was trying to quiet me so I might fall asleep, but the opium was just in that stage of effect to arouse resistance, and I insisted on doing a part of the talking myself.

" Doctor," I said, " your face is familiar to me ; I seem to remember having seen you somewhere years ago."

" Very likely, young man, very likely ; I have been in nearly every county in the State of Kentucky."

He made the statement proudly, as one might announce a just completed circuit of the globe, then continued :

" I once knew a man named Jack Burton, who married a Miss Hamilton of Warren County—out seven miles from Bowling Green."

" Yes, yes," I interrupted ; " he was my father."

" So I supposed, by your resemblance to him. Well, your Grandfather Hamilton was a remarkable man ; *Old* Alec Hamilton, they call him now · he was a very remarkable man."

In the Pennyrile

"He certainly was," I answered, "the most original man I have ever seen; why, I was only eleven years old the first time I saw him, and I remember it as though it had been yesterday."

The doctor was wise in his business, and knew I must talk, so suggested that I tell him what had made the meeting so memorable. Delighted to have the chance to do so, I began the story:

"If you remember him at all, doctor, you remember that he was a curious man; curious in person, manner, habits, and thoughts.

"He was six feet two inches in height and tipped the Fairbanks needle at the two hundred notch; I believe he had the largest head and the brightest eyes I have ever seen. That big head of his was covered by a dense growth of auburn hair, and as every hair stood separately erect it looked like a big sunburned chestnut burr; his eyes twinkled and snapped, sparkled and glowed, like blue blazes, though on occasion they could beam as softly and tenderly through their tears as those of some lovesick woman. His language was a curious idiom; the result of college training and after associ-

Juletty

ation with negroes and illiterate neighbors. Of course as a child I did not know his peculiarities, and looked forward with much pleasure to seeing him and my grandmother, of whose many virtues I had heard. My father had expatiated much on the beauty of my grandfather's farm—three thousand broad acres (you have doubtless noticed, doctor, that Kentucky acres are always broad, about twice as broad as the average acre) in the heart of the Pennyrile District. As good land, he said, as a crow ever flew over; red clay for subsoil, and equal to corn crops in succession for a hundred years. But I am going to tell you, doctor, of my visit as a child to my grandfather. I had never seen him, and felt a little natural shrinking from the first meeting. My mother had only been dead a few weeks and—well, in short, my young heart was pretty full of conflicting emotions when I drew near the old, red brick house. He was not expecting me, and I had to walk from the railway station. It was midsummer, and the old gentleman sat, without hat, coat, or shoes, outside his front door. As I drew near he called out threateningly:

“‘Who are you?’



In the Pennyrile

“‘Why, don’t you know me?’ I asked pleasantly.

“‘No, by Jacks! How in hell should I know you?’ he thundered.

“There was nothing repulsive about his profanity; falling from his lips it seemed guileless as cooings of sucking doves, so nothing daunted, I cried out cheerily as one who brings good news:

“‘I’m Jack Burton, your grandson!’

“‘What yer want here?’

“‘Why, I’ve come to see you, grandfather,’ I answered quiveringly.

“‘Well, dam yer, take er look an’ go home!’ he roared.

“‘I will!’ I shouted indignantly, and more deeply hurt than ever before or since, I turned and ran from him.

“Then almost before I knew it he had me in his great, strong arms, his tears and kisses beating softly down like raindrops on my face, while he mumbled through his sobs:

“‘Why, my boy, don’t you know your old grandfather’s ways? Eliza’s son! First-born of my first-born, you are more welcome than sunshine after a storm. Never mind what

Juletty

grandfather says, little man; just always remember he loves you like a son.'

"He had by that time carried me back to his door; there all at once his whole manner changed, and putting me on my feet, he cried: 'Thar, yer damned lazy little rascal, yer expect me ter carry yer eround like er nigger? Use yer own legs and find yer grandmother.'

"But he could not frighten me then, nor ever any more; I had seen his heart, and it was the heart of a poet, a lover, a gentleman, do what he might to hide it."

The doctor had allowed me to have my head, and talk in my rambling, reminiscent fashion, and agreed in my estimate of my grand-sire.

"Yessir, just like him for the world!" he cried.

"I was at his house one day when the ugliest man in Warren County came out; he did not wait to greet him, but shouted, 'My God, man, don't you wish ugliness was above par? You'd be er Cræsus.'" I laughed slowly; the drug was soothing me in spite of myself, and the doctor continued: "Now you admire that crotchety old man so much, suppose you make

In the Pennyrile

him a second visit? I have an idea the mountains are not wholesome for you right now; that is, your wound would heal more quickly elsewhere, understand me; and with this thought I suggest that when your fever passes away you will mount the iron horse and go down to the Pennyrile for a change. Your grandmother will nurse you to health and your grandfather will furnish you entertainment; in fact, it will be the very best thing for you, understand me."

I made no reply, and I suppose he thought me asleep, for he arose and tipped ponderously across the room. The motion thoroughly awakened me, and turning over I asked with lively interest, "Doctor, who was the strange lady in the drugstore this morning? She does not belong in this country, I know by her manner, to say nothing of her clothes. I cannot describe her, for she was so heavily veiled I could not see her face; but as she stood at the counter I could see a tiny curl of auburn hair lying against the most beautiful, creamy neck I ever saw—I—I—" I was too nearly asleep to say anything further, but as in a dream I heard the doctor growl, "Shot twice in one

Juletty

day ; but Cupid's wound will help to combat Jim's bullet."

I slept heavily, and yet was always dreaming that I had the right to jealously kiss away the caressing curl from that beautiful, beautiful neck.

CHAPTER II

In Which I Snuff the Wind

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH I SNUFF THE WIND

“A LITTLE child shall lead them.”

Certainly there comes a time in every man's life when his docility is such that even a little child might lead him ; this came to me in the first week after I was wounded. I obeyed the least command the big doctor laid upon me, and in return he did his best to find out the identity and whereabouts of the lady of the auburn curl, but so utterly did he fail that he finally insisted she was a myth of the opium conjurer. I knew better, and knew also that I should never be happy till I once more saw her, and to better advantage. Nevertheless I was plastic in the doctor's hands, and allowed him to pack my grip, make me ready, and ship me to my grandmother for the nursing I needed. I can never repay him for this ; it laid the foundation-stone of my life's happiness.

Juletty

Slipping through tunnels or climbing the crests of the mountains, catching glimpses of gorgeous vistas of autumn colors, we left the rough, mountainous portions of Kentucky and rolled into the smooth, level prospects in the southern part of the State. It was hard to believe that so great a difference physically could exist in the same State; but the peculiarity I found was not confined to the land, it was quite as marked in the people, and my opportunities for character study in the next few months were more than delightful.

When we arrived at Bowling Green I gathered together my belongings that I might the more readily alight at the next station—Rich Pond.

As I had sent no notice of my visit I had to walk from the railway station to the farmhouse, and as it was only a mile I was glad of the chance to stretch my legs, though my grandmother was shocked that I had so exerted myself, and to please her I was forced to lie on a sofa till supper-time.

God bless an old-fashioned woman!

She is a solace and joy to every man who comes in contact with her, though she does

In Which I Snuff the Wind

think there is no panacea like a good sofa and "lying down."

I saw nothing of my grandfather till we entered the dining-room; he greeted me warmly, made me welcome, and asked after my father. "How is the old man?" he said. "He has given you a stepmother at last, has he? What sorter woman is she?"

"Oh, I scarcely know; she is a little thing," I answered cautiously; "she is only five feet high, so there is not much of her."

"God," he said, his blue eyes twinkling and his big head wagging, "that don't tell me nothin'. Ain't much uv er wild-cat nother, but whut thar is is hell. Whut's matter with that arm? Moonshiner's rifle, hey? Well, I'm afeered yer air out uv ther fryin' pan inter ther fire. Thar's er power of moonshine lickor sold in this deestrick; an' ther still that makes it can't be foun' nother."

I pricked up my ears, distended my nostrils, and snuffed the wind, eagerly demanding that he tell me all about it.

"Nothin' ter tell," he said gruffly.

"Then how do you know there is such a thing?"

Juletty

“Great Lord, boy, how do you know ther sun’s er shinin’? I know thar’s er ’licit still eround hyar cause I see ther consequences—niggers drunk ever’ night in ther week, all ther country breakdowns endin’ in er drunken row, an’ er jug an’ er half dollar in ther right place gittin’ yer ther stuff to git in the same fix. Want any more evidence?”

“That is sufficient,” I said dryly; “but has no effort been made to break the business up and bring the offenders to justice?”

“Oh, some, some,” and he chuckled at the remembrance of it. “Thar wuz three United States marshals come er skylarkin’ round turn-in’ their noses up like they smelt somethin’. But if they smelt it they didn’t stay ter run it ter ground. Cose they all come right here ter my house an’ stayed; warn’t no place else fer ’em ter go, an’ I was very glad ter have ’em. Well, the fust one wuz er pooty nice sorter chap—perdigous fond uv er hoss. Never wuz er day he didn’t want ter go out ‘fer er canter,’ he said, till I told him er gentleman’s hoss didn’t know how ter canter, an’ er regular saddle hoss wouldn’t do nothin’ but runnin’ walk, an’ wouldn’t be caught dead er parkin’.

In Which I Snuff the Wind

Well, that seemed ter teach him some sense, an' one evenin' he struck out through ther woods in ez pooty er walk ez er saddler ever hit; but he come back in lessen er hour, an' he'd lef' off ther walk an' wuz pintedly er runnin'. Cose I went out ter ther hoss lot ter meet 'im an' ask 'im whut in hell wuz ther matter; he was so blamed winded he couldn't speak, but he jes stuck 'is hat at me. I took it an' looked it over, an' ther wuz two as clean little bullet holes in ther crown ez yer ever saw. He said nex' mornin' that he heered two shots in ther bushes, an' would er got down an' examined into ther affair, but they skeered his hoss so bad that he run clar home 'thout stoppin'. Cose I knowed that wuz er darned lie; that hoss warn't skeered uv no gun, fer he wuz foalded, an' raised, an' broke right hyar in ol' Kaintucky. Well, he had Mitch ter drive 'im ter Bowling Green nex' mornin', an' ther nex' time I heered fum him—last time, too—he wuz back in New York whar he b'longed. Well, the nex' one come fum Tennessee, whar he'd had er lot uv practice ketchin' 'licit stillers; he wuz er sorter dandy, dressed fine ez Friday. My neighbors air allus quick ter see a

Juletty

pint, an' treat stylish folks in style, so ther very mornin' after he landed they sent over er nigger rigged up in er swaller-tailed coat. He come out ter see whut wuz wanted, an' ther nigger bowed like er French dancin' marster, an' handed him er card on er silver waiter, an' the card contained a promise ter change his silk necktie to er hemp one in lessen twenty-four hours lessen he went back whar he come fum. So he wandered away, too. When the third one come—a yaller-headed little feller fum Philadelphy—he only staid long enough ter jes hear about ther others an' then he fol-lered 'em. That's erbout all ther sperience we had with States marshals. Would yer like fer me ter advertize that you air in that business, Jack?" His eyes twinkled teasingly, though he added, "Dam er child er mine that's erfeered!"

I was silent a moment; I wanted a thought before answering: "I am not badly frightened, but it might help me if you keep it a secret that I am a marshal."

"All right, sir, all right; I am jez ez shamed uv it ez you air. But I wanter tell yer, young man, right hyar an' now, that while I am er law-

In Which I Snuff the Wind

abidin' citizen myself, an' would uphold my Government with my blood if need be, I won't have no child uv mine interferin' with my neighbors. Er man's business is his own affair, an' I'm satisfied even the Government can be too all-fired perticular er inquirin' inter it."

Pushing back his chair, he rose from the table as if fretted by the subject; he did not, however, forget to be hospitable, and suggested that I accompany him to his mule lot on his usual daily visit. I gladly accepted his invitation, and having lighted our pipes we strolled leisurely out to lean with arms akimbo on the rail fence that enclosed the lot and discuss the merits of the bay and sorrel hybrids, fat, sleek, and frisky, that seemed bent on destroying each other in their wild frolics.

A scrawny, frecklefaced, bowlegged mulatto with a huge feed basket was dispensing supper to the animals; he was a small man, and I could but feel anxious for his safety when now and then some near-by mule would lash out with both heels. I expressed the fear to my grandfather, but he laughingly replied:

"No danger in ther worl'! That little nigger

Juletty

might feed 'em for ther nex' forty years an' he'd never git er kick; they're sorter half brothers anyhow. Didn't yer know the Lord Ermighty made er nigger an' er mule ther same day?"

I passed over his question, and trying to be business, asked :

"What will you make on' this lot? They are fine ones."

He had no time to reply. The little mulatto laughed and said :

"Marse Alec won't make nothin' on 'em! He's ben er feedin' these mules fer ten years, an' he's done got so 'tached ter 'em he won't sell 'em ertall."

The old gentleman's face reddened at the rascal's impudence, but he could not deny the notorious and ridiculous fact, so only said :

"Shut yer fool mouth, Jim! Come on, Jack, less go down ter ther blacksmith shop; I still keep one in ther same ol' place, tho' it costs more than it comes to since ther war. But I just had ter keep it up ter give Mitch something ter do; he's ther best smith in Kentucky to-day. Fact is, I couldn't ride er hoss Mitch



In Which I Snuff the Wind

hadn't shod ; but come on, he'll be mortally offended if you don't come ter see him yer fust evenin' home."

I followed my grandfather, thinking how strong his hold on the affections of his slaves must be that they still, after all the years of freedom, called him master.

The evening was lovely. The western sun had just sunken from sight, and the whole heaven was blushing like a schoolgirl after her first kiss ; the evening star winked at us with an eye glowing as a happy lover's ; that sallow old jade, the moon, had a knowing look as she crept slyly and slowly up the eastern horizon, seeming to half expect she would find some new mischief agog—foolish old thing, after her thousands of years watching lovers.

"Nay, nay, Luna !" I cried aloud, gayly.

"Hey, hey?" queried grandfather, walking ahead. I did not reply. I knew he would rather die than accept my assistance, though he was badly crippled from rheumatism, so walked behind him in the narrow path. Leaning on his stout hickory staff, his huge legs followed one another so slowly that I grew chilly in the autumn air and welcomed the

Juletty

assurance of warmth in the red glow that fell athwart the road from the widespread smithy door. Mitch, the smith, had heard us coming, and had stopped work; we could see him in the distance. And what a Dantesque picture he made! He was an immense negro, and as he stood a little back from the door, holding in one hand a pair of pinchers in which he clasped a red-hot horseshoe, the other mighty arm uplifted poising his hammer, his sleek leather apron, checked shirt, bare throat and chest gleaming in the crimson dancing firelight—verily, he looked as some black fiend at the entrance to Hades.

When I stepped towards him he recognized me, to my surprise, and impulsively snatched from his head the old piece of hat (crownless as a banished king and rimless as a bucket gone to staves), caught my hand in his brawny palm, and shouted eagerly: "Marse Jack! 'Tis fer shore! It's Miss 'Liza's boy! Now ain't I glad ter see yer? Lawd, I nussed chore maw when she wusn't higher'n yer knee; an' I's raised up thar whar yer come frum. How is yer, Marse Jack; how is yer, ennyhow?"

I responded warmly to the old darkey's

In Which I Snuff the Wind

greeting, and then my attention was called to my grandfather, who, on entering the smithy, had stumbled over a great stone that lay as a step in the door, and he had given his poor rheumatic legs a fearful twinge. He groaned piteously a moment, then looking up at Mitch as he towered above him, he roared in madness of anger: "Take that cussed stone and throw it ter hell!"

The negro's black eyes sparkled, and lolling his head to one side and thrusting his tongue into his cheek with a keen appreciation of the joke he was playing, he said:

"Er, er, hadn' I better fling it somewhars else, Marse Alec? Yer might stumble over it ergin."

The laugh was on the old gentleman, and he recognized the fact goodnaturedly; then he and Mitch fell a-talking, notes of the day's work were taken and plans formed for the morrow.

Half listening, half drowsing in the pleasant warmth, I returned to thoughts of that illicit distillery, and began to form plots for raiding it; a bird-dog will set when he scents a quail, a hound will bay when he strikes a fox

Juletty

trail, and a States' marshal will work when he hears the first whisper of illicit liquor.

My dreams were, however, broken in upon; strangely enough, too, it was by the notes of a violin.

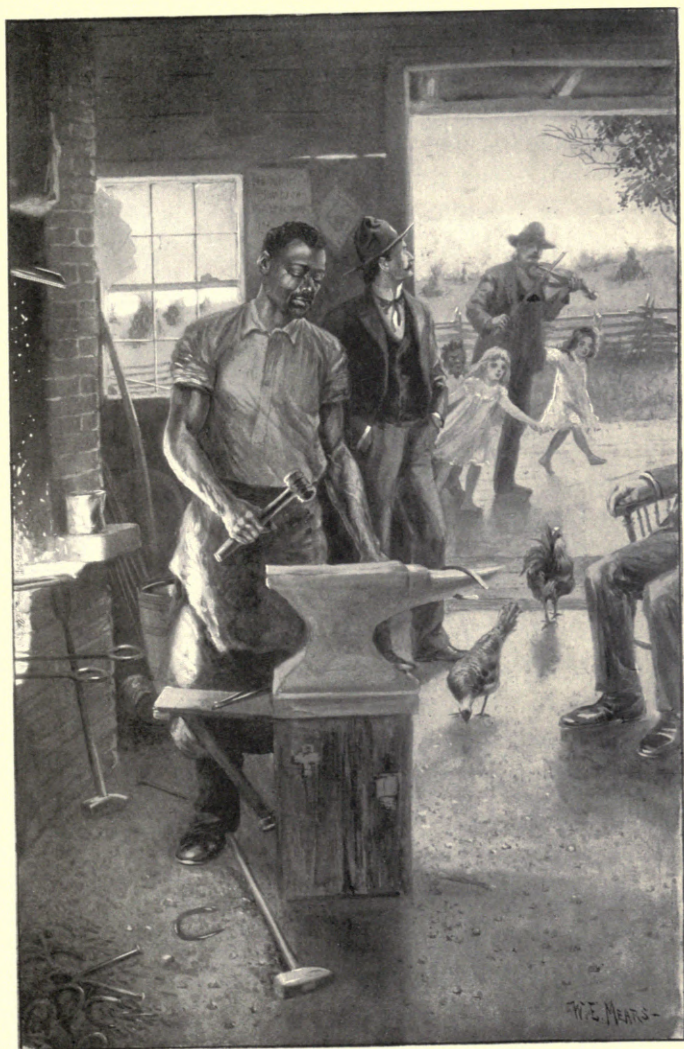
Not scraping and screeching, after the manner of country violins in general, whose tones ever seem to lack the polished smoothness of their city brethren, but these were full, tender, melting notes like those that tell the springtime love tale of some wild brown thrush.

The rich strains at once interested me, and I looked inquiringly at my grandfather.

"Just that fool Buddy," he said, and continued his talk with Mitch.

I arose and walked to the door, and looked out upon the night. Almost as clearly as by day I could see in the crystal moonlight the dirt road curving away like a sluggish serpent through the knee-deep orchard grass; and down its middle came a procession of Bacchanals.

The foremost figure was that of a man, his bended arm wielding the bow of a violin which rested under the bowed head, while his lithe figure and bounding step, half skip, half dance,



In Which I Snuff the Wind

kept time to his music; behind him were twenty or thirty children, black and white, and they, too, with the unstudied grace of childhood, danced after their leader. Some had their short skirts uplifted, others held flowers above their heads, others, after the fashion of the old-time negro dancer, bent forward with delighted eyes to study the beauty of their own steps; others yet, who seemed to be embryo lovers, were clasped in each other's arms, but all were dancing with the wild, careless, free, graceful ecstasy of motion which none but very small children and savages ever attain.

Grandfather could see them from his chair, as they drew near, but though his eyes betrayed his artistic pleasure in the scene, he only grunted, with apparent disapproval of the entire affair:

"The Lord was mighty near out o' er job when he made Buddy."

The dancers were passing.

"Where are they going?" I enquired without taking my eyes from the fascinating groups.

"Out to ther crossroads, whar there's plenty of room and good soft dust ter dance in," he snorted as he rose to go home. I knew how

Juletty

he adored my uncle Warner (Buddy, as he called him), knew how he appreciated the gentle, refined nature, and so made no response to his seeming harshness when he said as we moved, "There Buddy 'll go and fiddle, and them little devils 'll dance for three round hours. Er born fool ; that's what Buddy is."

Much as he loved him, this son was a great trial to the proud old father. He was absolutely devoid of all practical common sense. No supercilious critic who ever picked flaws in poems he could not write, was more capable than he of appreciating good poetry ; none revelled more in garnering from some gem the poet's sweetest thought, or followed with greater pleasure the author's most skilful plot and best English. Not one of the many exquisite views on and around his father's farm that he had not, with considerable skill, transferred to canvas, and he had, with the plastic clay from old Rich Pond, moulded into undeniable likeness a figure of his father's giant frame and big shock head.

Buddy had never seen a musical instrument he could not play on with more or less success, and yet in his whole life he had never once

In Which I Snuff the Wind

played an air; he simply struck chords with such perfection of time and expression that it was a joy to hear him. Like the pipe of Mother Goose's famous Tom, his violin set all listeners to dancing, and it was to that primitive music of the chords that the Bacchanalian orgy at the crossroads was being conducted.

But place a business proposition before this poor "Babe o' Genius" and he forthwith became as helpless as a newly swaddled infant. He would join merrily in the laugh that was sure to follow any attempt on his part to do a practical thing, though I, who knew him well—he had spent several years at my father's and attended school—saw that his sensitive soul shrank from the ridicule of his weakness, and I realized the bitterness that lay under the smiling assertion, "I am Jack of all trades and master of none," and I knew how that gentle heart would have found perfect happiness in being able to master only one of his many beautiful possibilities; but I also knew that it would never be. He would go through life a failure, spite of all his talent, because of being absolutely void of what is called "business sense," "practicality," "management." In

Juletty

short, he was a genius, a dreamer, who in grasping after great shadows missed the greater substance. It saddened me to think of him and all he had failed in, and I fancy my grandfather's thoughts had followed the trend of mine, for our return walk to the "big house" was a silent one. Arrived there, I bade him good-night, and went to my room, but not to sleep; the stem of my pipe between my lips, and my feet on the window sill, I leaned back in a large, comfortable easy-chair, and enjoyed the beauty of the night and laid plans for raiding that hidden still, resolving to do it, no odds if it took me all winter. But often across my soberer thoughts there would flash a vision of an auburn curl and a creamy neck, and, strangely enough, the more sure I felt of solving the mystery the more vivid seemed the vision, until I half thought my success in the still hunt might be rewarded by a second sight of the veiled lady.

CHAPTER III

In Which I Find Other Game

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH I FIND OTHER GAME

GLORIOUS October, thy sum of loveliness is complete in southern Kentucky! Then all the air is full of sweet autumn odors; scent of mellowing peach and husking corn; and oh, the delicious fragrance of overripe grapes when they have dropped from their frosted stems in little heaps side by side with their sere and withered leaves. I found joy in the simple fact that I was living. Then, like all young Kentuckians who find that happiness welling up within them, I longed for shotgun and dog that I might deprive some other creature of the same delight. It is a modern relic of ancient savagery that causes all men to enjoy a day's hunt. I especially was anxious at this time for the sport, for my grandfather had aroused my enthusiasm by telling me a tale of the olden time when not hundreds but thousands of wild pigeons roosted in "The Grove"

Juletty

every night. He said if one would get out at "the fust crack of day" no firearm was needed, for then wild pigeons were too thick to shoot, and a stout hickory stick would slay sackfuls. He said in those days each tree bore its burden of birds; indeed, so numerous were they that great limbs frequently broke beneath their weight, killing and wounding hundreds.

"Do you mean that literally?" I asked.

"Why, certainly I do. I have seen them carried away in two-bushel bags morning after morning. More than that, when they would rise in the early dawn to go in a body to their feeding grounds, I have heard the whirr of their wings sound like the roar of a dozen mills, and have seen them blot out the sunlight like some black stormcloud. I know that sounds like exaggeration, but I can find twenty men in Warren County who will remember it just as I have told you."

I expressed my satisfaction with his veracity, but told him I positively must see what the country had in the shape of game at that present time. I thought my arm strong enough for the gun, so called up my dog next morning

In Which I Find Other Game

and set out for a hunt. Early as it was, grandmother saw me off, and I started, telling her not to wait breakfast for me if I should happen to be late. I walked through the grove in the gray of the early morning—it was not then more than half-past five—looking up at the magnificent trees and trying to fancy how it would seem to find them laden with birds; then crossed to a neighboring stubble field, where my dog, a fine setter, evinced an interest. I called to him to hunt, waving my hand to the right, and then followed his alert, wiry body as he dashed in and out of the stubble, his intelligent eyes glancing hither and thither, scanning every inch of the ground, while his sensitive nostrils scented the passing breeze. He hunted over perhaps half of the field, and I was beginning to feel discouraged, when suddenly he paused; rigid as bronze, one foot uplifted, the head thrust forward and low, the tail stiff and straight out from the body, he stood, a monument of Patience.

“Steady!” I warned him; then with cocked gun balanced in my hands, crept stealthily forward.

A crackle of twigs beneath my feet, and

Juletty

“Br-r-r-r,” a flock of partridges lifted like brown autumn leaves in a whirlwind.

“Bang! bang!” roared my gun; two of the pretty innocents obeyed the order and dropped some twenty yards from where I stood.

“Find ’em; find ’em, Chesney, old fellow,” I said caressingly to the dog. He sprang eagerly forward with half-open muzzle and nose close to earth, wriggled into a thicket and crept out again with one of the birds in his jaws, laid it in my hand, and speedily brought out the other.

I am not at all sentimental, but the quiver of departing life in the warm bodies, as they lay on my palm, said, “Enough of this”; besides which, a shout of merry laughter from the woodland near excited my curiosity. It was a woman’s laughter, and any sane man would have done just as I did—forgot both dog and game and sought the laughter.

I crossed the road and looked on a vision which to me was more beautiful than dreams. A gnarled wild grapevine had twisted its sinuous length about a stout young maple, and large clusters of its black fruit hung from a canopy of crimson and gold leaves, and

In Which I Find Other Game

perched among them, her hands clinging to a laden branch, was a young girl. Her auburn hair was dishevelled in the morning breeze, and her eyes were like twin globes of old Bourbon, imprisoning dancing imps of mischief; her scarlet lips were parted over small white teeth as she laughed at the ineffectual efforts of her escort to join her in her airy seat. Even at that first glance I noted the firmness of her pink flesh, with its ever changing tints of red, and felt angry that some insolent thorn had dared to leave its mark upon her round arm.

It was a feast of beauty, but I had not many minutes to enjoy it, for the ardor of my look spoke to her heart, and, though there was no sound from my quarter, she moved restlessly several times and finally lifted her eyes straight to mine. Maiden modesty asserted itself in the flush which came to her face as she saw me, and the quickness with which, like a young athlete, she swung to the ground.

I advanced with outstretched hand to greet her, for the motion had recalled to my memory a playmate of that other visit, and I said earnestly: "I am sure those are Juliet's eyes,

Juletty

and I remember when I was a child and you were a child ; have you forgotten ? ”

She tried to look at me coolly with those radiant, curious orbs of hers, that looked as if some live thing were imprisoned in their depths ; but my vanity was gratified at the unmistakable pleasure there.

“ No, I have not forgotten ; you are Jack Burton. I am glad to see you again,” she said, quietly.

I had not thought of the girl for Heaven only knows how long, but all at once I remembered that back home, somewhere, I had a mite of a ring she had given me when I was eleven and she six years of age, with the assurance that “ now we are engaged.” I told her at once that I had come to redeem my part of the contract, and that nothing else in the world had brought me to Warren County. She laughed and pretended not to remember, but most graciously asked me home with them to breakfast. I accepted gladly the invitation, and we strolled off, followed by the boy with the grapes. Her “ nephew, James Lincque,” she had called him, a youth of about sixteen years I judged, small, red-haired, black-eyed, and best de-



In Which I Find Other Game

scribed by changing the spelling of his name to Lynx.

Now I remembered that at my grandfather's the negroes designated the Lincques as "po' white trash," so that, though the girl's radiant beauty was but the fulfilment of her early physical promise, the evidence of culture and refinement was unexpected and I wondered at it. Her nephew showed no such characteristics, and his speech savored of the usual dialect. In response to questions from me, Juliet pointed out places of interest as we wended our way to the main road where the path we followed curved around an immense oak stump; on this stump when we reached it a yellow stone jug had a place; seeing it, Miss Juliet frowned.

"Do you know we have illicit distilling down here?" she asked; "there is one of the very disagreeable evidences of it."

"Good!" said I to myself; "here is the first link in the chain I mean to weave around that daring lawbreaker."

I considered it a good omen that Juliet had forged that first link for me, and gayly lifted the jug, smiling to find the telltale half dollar underneath.

Juletty

"He who makes that stuff must be a pretty sly rascal for all his pluck," I said aloud. "Why don't you make a detective of yourself, Jim, and find him out?"

"I 'ont keer nothin' 'bout findin' him out; he can make moonshine whiskey till ther crack er doom, fer all I keer."

Arrived at their home, I received a cordial greeting from gentle old Mr. Lincque, whom we found seated on the front porch reading his Bible; the awkward reserve of his wife's welcome contrasted in his favor, and it was with a mental note of his superiority to her that I took my place at the table. My long walk and happy frame of mind gave me a thorough appreciation of the dishes of fried ham and eggs, delicious corn-cakes, and flaky hot biscuit—the usual menu for a country breakfast in Kentucky. Immediately after we were seated the old man bowed his gray head over his folded hands, and with reverence and fervor besought a blessing on household and guest. I was never more impressed with one's piety. Scarcely had the "Amen" been uttered when the wife with startling abruptness rattled cups and saucers with what I thought was unnecessary



In Which I Find Other Game

vigor, and served in silence her excellent coffee. Only once or twice did she speak during the meal, and then it was to address Juliet.

"Juletty," she said in soft, drawling tones, "ask your pa if he'll have some more coffee."

Juliet repeated the request to her father; he heard well, so I knew it could not be deafness that made it needful that his wife should address him through another.

"Juletty, tell your pa to give Mister Burton another piece of that ham," she said.

Juliet again complied, and as no one noticed the requests I was aware it was the custom that they be made, but was not at all prepared for what followed.

"My dear," Mr. Lincque said, looking mildly at his wife, "may I send you a piece of ham?"

"Juletty, tell your pa I've finished my breakfast," said madam.

Juliet, with remarkable self-possession, kept up a merry banter with me.

"You have certainly had an 'eye opener' this morning," I said. "Did you try the 'mountain dew' at the stump?"

She laughingly denied the imputation, bidding me remember that the jug was empty.

Juletty

"So it was," I said, when Mr. Lincque broke in with a heavy sigh :

"It is remarkable that no way has been found to apprehend that 'licit distiller; it is a disgrace to the neighborhood that such a thing can go on in our midst. I am a law-abiding citizen myself, and so far as in me lies mean to keep everybody else to the same notch, and I have offered a hundred dollars private reward to any individual who will capture the feller and his still."

James giggled; I supposed because of the old man's manner and speech. His neighbors accused him of the enormity of "talking like a book," and, indeed, his conversation was vastly superior to that of his illiterate class. To me the reason was plain he had learned to speak well by constant and devout study of the Bible.

When James's giggle reached his ears he turned to him with the mildness of an accusing angel, and said quietly :

"My son, leave the table."

And, in spite of his mildness, James left.

Mr. Lincque then continued as though he had not been interrupted: "'Render unto

In Which I Find Other Game

Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's' is the command."

Just then Mrs. Lincque arose and left the room; her husband was evidently unmoved by her apparent contempt, and talked placidly on till I pushed back from the table, and urged my grandmother's uneasiness over my prolonged absence as an excuse for so hastily leaving him. He accompanied me to the door, and there called the disgraced James, suggesting that he go with us to the crossroads—about half a mile—and show me his study. I was rather surprised that the young rascal should have a study, but urged that he give me the pleasure of seeing it, bade Juliet good morning, and assured her I would be only too glad to come again, as I followed Jim.

On our arrival at the "jug stump" as it was generally called, we found the yellow jug had been removed. Jim grinned at me. No reference was made to that matter, however, for the grandfather was busy pointing out to me the beauties of a gigantic sugar tree about one hundred yards further on; the long, straight limbs were laden with the brilliant autumn foliage, and it looked much like a huge, mottled

Juletty

Chinese umbrella. When we reached its foot, I paused with the others, and James ran swiftly up the trunk with the ease of the son of a hundred monkeys, inviting me to follow. Seeing that it was for a purpose, I did so. There was the boy's study, most ingeniously arranged; an old whiskey barrel lay across the lowest forks of the tree, the upper side cushioned with oilcloth pillows; at one end a box which, opened, showed books and writing materials, while over all was a rude canopy, also of oilcloth, serving as protection from inclement weather.

"It's er putty fine view up there, ain't it, Mr. Burton?" called my host from below. "You can see that James is a lover of Nature as well as a student, can't you?"

I looked at the sly, ordinary face of the boy beside me, and wondered if he would ever be worthy of the fond pride of the fine old grandfather, and then turned to admire the glowing picture spread about me; yet so truly was I a still-hunter that the chief impression I gained from the look was that the study commanded a fine view of the jug stump, and might be used to advantage as a place of lookout for

In Which I Find Other Game

the smuggler who bartered his goods there. No sooner had the thought occurred to me than I formed a bold resolution. Turning, I said, "James, meet me here early to-morrow morning and I will add some new books to your collection."

The boy looked at me uneasily, and was restless, but showed no pleasure in the promise; the grandfather was, however, profuse in his expressions of gratitude as he bade me good-by.

When I reached my grandfather's I explained my absence, and also expressed my surprise at the evident rise in the world of the Lincque family.

"Yes," said my grandfather; "it is a strange case. None of the family were worth killin': shif'less, triflin', no 'count; good fer nothin' but ter set eround and whistle and talk politics, till one day this ole scalawag took it into his infernal ole head to come over here and ask me to loan him er thousan' dollars 'fer God's sake.' I done it, of course" (he looked ashamed; loaning money and signing security notes was his great weakness), "and, by jing! 'twarn't er year till he paid it, interest and all. It give me a terrible setback. I been loaning

Juletty

money ter the rascals all my life, and that was the fust time such a thing happened. But it showed he is honest if he ain't nothin' else good."

"And with that wee bit of honesty to encourage you, you have been loaning money to the rest ever since," said his sarcastic better half. He did not notice her, but went on to say to me: "Well, it warn't no time till he built that fine house he lives in, fitted it up sprucey as yer please, sent Juliet to school, and done his best fer that fool grandson of his, till it's just like you see—the boy and the girl do nothin' but fly eround over the country on the best horseflesh to be had, and frolic eternally. He owns five hundred acres of good land, don't appear to owe anything, and is in putty good fix; but how he done it so darned quick, that's the mystery."

After a moment's reflection he added, as if sorely puzzled: "The feller's a gol-darned rascal, that's what he is."

"Now, Mr. Hamilton, I would not say that if I were you," expostulated my grandmother; "you certainly know Mr. Lincque is a very pious man, and I never heard any one pray so

In Which I Find Other Game

beautifully. Do you know, Jack dear, I half think Mr. Hamilton dislikes the poor man because he was his successful rival for the hand of Mrs. Lincque? She was quite a belle in her palmy days."

Grandmother glanced archly at her husband—well did she know that he worshipped her—before continuing with renewed interest her conversation with me. "Did you notice that she only addresses her husband through a sort of interpreter? She has not spoken to him since the day he borrowed that money from Mr. Hamilton; I fancy she felt chagrined that he had to apply to her quondam lover for assistance. It seems strange, though, that she does not forgive him, now that the loan was so advantageous and has made him a rich man."

"No," said grandfather with conviction; "Martha Lincque is a woman of unusual good sense—horse sense—and that cannot be her reason for such conduct; the feller has done some wrong, is still committing some sin which she cannot condone, for I am sure she would forgive any crime of the past." And again he said after a pause, "The man's er darned rascal! He is, shore's yer born."

Juletty

Whatever the father might be, I was sure of one thing—a sight of Juliet's Bourbon-colored eyes had intoxicated me much more deeply than would a drink of the real article, twenty years old.

CHAPTER IV

In Which I Win One Game

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH I WIN ONE GAME

THE following morning, after my early breakfast, I went to the tryst with James. Early as I was, he had preceded me, and I hoped I had misjudged the boy, and would find him really anxious for the books which I carried under my arm, and which were my excuse for the visit. I had laid my plans on the basis that boldness often wins what craft will fail of, and was resolved on making a confidant and ally of the young student, so, after some talk on book lore, I assailed him with this question, put with easy familiarity, "Jim, old boy, can you keep a secret?"

He eyed me sharply, slantwise and suspiciously, as a bird ere it wings its way from the wiles of the serpent, then replied, with careless confidence and utter indifference as to all secrets, "Cose I can; ef I couldn' I'd er blabbed erbout you er fallin' in love 'ith Aunt

Juletty

Juliet the minnit yer clapt eyes on her yistiddy ; an' I'd er tole whut's the reason gramma 'ont speak ter grandpa ; an' I'd up an' tell yer right now who Aunt Juliet's shore 'nuff sweetheart is ; an' I'd er——"

I stopped him there ; he had given me sufficient proof of his capacity for secrecy.

"Now, Jimmie," I said, in the most confidential manner I could assume, "you are not to breathe this to a living soul until I shall give you leave to do so. My business is to find and destroy illicit distilleries, and put their operators where they cannot start others. I am a United States marshal."

Horror and affright flashed into the boy's face—the look of a beast at bay—and I thought for a moment he might spring at my throat ; then he recovered himself, and asked : "Why doncher go ter ther mount'ns fer that sorter work? There ain't no stills ter 'mount to nothin' 'roun' here. Ain't none 'at ever I heered uv, 'cep'n this here jug stump thing, an' nobody don't keer nothin' 'tall fer it—not er blame thing."

He spoke with assumed contempt of the hidden still, but his tones were almost pleading,

In Which I Win One Game

though there might have been a suggestion of threatening in them when he added, "You jes' go on back ter them mount'ns now. I would ef I wuz you, an' yer'll fin' ten thar to whar you'll fin' one here."

I looked keenly into his face till he flushed under it, then he tossed his arms above his head, yawned in pretended weariness of the subject, and said, with what he meant for indifference, "Well, cose 'tain't nothin' ter me whut cher do."

"No, that is very true," I answered; "but I wish you would allow me to sit up here, either with or without you, and watch that stump occasionally."

"Yer air welcome ter set here till Gabr'el blows his trump fer all't I keer," he replied cheerfully, "'cep'n yer got ter keep still while I'm er doin' my readin'."

His self-possession quite restored, he began clambering down. "Thought you were going to read," I said.

"Am; but I gotter fill my water jug; I can't set still nowhars fer fifteen minnits 'thout er drink uv water. Gran'pa, he says it's 'cause I ain't never got over the malary fevers; I al'ays

Juletty

keep this jug up here"; and swinging to his shoulder a yellow jug he had taken from his book box—and which was a fac-simile of one I had been careful to place on the stump with the requisite half dollar before mounting to the airy study—James stepped to the ground.

"I'll be back dreckly," he called as he sauntered off, whistling gayly. When he reached the stump he placed his jug beside mine, and stopped to tie his shoe; when he straightened up he shaded his eyes with his hand and gazed eagerly off to the horizon towards my right, then he shouted:

"Gemini whiz!! Jes' look at ther pidgins!"

I turned quickly, and scanned the heavens and the earth, but never a pigeon did I see. Jim's ringing laugh came back to me: "April fool! Er way here in November, too; ain't yer ashamed uv yerself?" and, laughing mockingly, he ran on.

I was amused at his childishness, and it recalled a talk I had with Mitch that morning. Not wishing to annoy my grandmother with the business, I had gone to Mitch to borrow a jug to tempt the distiller, and he had earnestly implored me to have nothing at all to do with

In Which I Win One Game

the affair. Said he, "Marse Jack, it's er down-right temptin' uv Providence; thar's hants in that stump sartin shore. Why, I've knowed ther jug whut wuz sot thar to jes' git itse'f filled right whilst er man wuz er standin' lookin', and nary human seen who done it. I've knowed men ter set er jug thar uv dark nights, an' jes' only put er quarter underneathen it, and then he'd jes' git his jug half full; now who's gwineter know er quarter fum er half when it's darker'n er stack uv black cats, cep'n hants? 'Sides, Marse Jack," and Mitch grew more eloquently earnest, "'sides, thet licker is jes' nacherly too good ter be perduced by mortenary han's." I laughed to myself as I remembered how satisfied Mitch had been that the last assertion was a clincher too strong to be doubted. Just at that time James announced his return by a loud, shrill whistle; once more beside me, he offered the water he had brought. Being thirsty, I lifted the vessel to my lips, but one taste sufficed; the jug had held whiskey at some time, and both scent and taste clung to it still. With a wry face I returned it to the less fastidious owner, who took it with a smile.

Julietty

"Yer won't want no more drinks outen my jug, will yer?"

"Never," I solemnly affirmed, and was again struck by the peculiarity of his expression, this time one of relief.

"Oh," he said, "Aunt Juliet tole me ter ax yer if yer wouldn't go er hicker-nut huntin' with us-all this evenin'. After we git all ther hicker-nuts we want we air er goin' ter eat er big supper in ther woods, an' by that time ther moon'll be up, an' we'll ride home in ther moonshine."

"I shall be charmed," I answered with alacrity.

Jim grinned. "I ain't so all powerful stuck on goin' myself, but grandpa won't never let Aunt Juliet go nowhars 'thout I go ter look arter her. Geerls uv her age need er sight uv seein' after. I know one thing fer sartin, I'll be mighty glad when she gits ter be er ol' maid or gits married, one, I ain't er keenin' which. I do like Aunt Juliet er heap, though; she's better'n mos' geerls, an' married women has er sight er trouble." This was worldly wisdom beyond Jim's years, and I could see that his dialect was largely cultivated, and judged it was to irritate his grandparent.

In Which I Win One Game

"Perhaps she will be an exception to the married rule," I suggested, trying to show by my manly bearing what a capable young fellow I could prove myself to be on occasion; "any man might be proud to spend his life trying to make Miss Juliet happy."

Jim sniffed.

I felt slightly discouraged by his evident disapproval, and so dropped from my perch to go home and prepare for the nutting expedition. Then Jim volunteered:

"Me 'n' Aunt Juliet air er goin' hossback; come back to our-all's house when yer git ready an' we'll all go out tergether."

His proposition suited me perfectly.

"Say," he cried as I started off, "we forgot all erbout ther jug stump, did'n' we?"

"No, sir; I have not taken my eyes off it while I talked to you; but I will stop and get my half dollar and keep it for another watching time with you up there; I certainly enjoyed it."

The boy sprang to my side and followed me, his eyes twinkling with pleasure at the compliment I had paid him.

When we reached the stump I paused and

Juletty

lifted my jug. I was amazed to find—by its weight—that it was full, and my half dollar gone!

My face must have betrayed my surprise, for Jim whispered, with white lips and trembling voice, "By George! I believe it's hants."

I turned and caught the boy by the shoulder, and looked at him squarely while I said with all the sternness I could muster, "Jim, you are the only human being who has been near this spot since I placed this jug here, and then I know it to have been empty; I now find it full of illicit whiskey; come, explain it to me."

With a strength for which I was wholly unprepared by the slight figure, he shook himself free from my grip, and throwing back his usually stooped shoulders, lifted his flashing eyes to mine and said—having partially dropped his dialect: "Mr. Burton, you have no right to call me a rascal, and I don't intend you shall do it neither; I know I'm nothin' but a boy, but I'm as honest as you are—an'—an'——"

The wide-open, honest eyes, the righteous indignation of his entire bearing, worked on me, and I interrupted him by saying lightly,

In Which I Win One Game

“ All right, Jim ; all right, sir ; I ask pardon. You see I was so certain I had not lost sight of the jug for one moment that I had nothing to think but that you might have effected the filling by some trick, but I now see how utterly impossible it was that you could have done so. I am sure the distiller has crept up through this dense undergrowth that comes up to the stump from the left. Why, I can fancy the whole thing ; he watched us from this side, lying flat to escape observation, and at some point of our conversation, when we looked at each other, simply slipped my jug and replaced it by one similar to it, save the new jug was full of his ‘ sperrits.’ ”

Jim gazed at me admiringly ; he was much impressed by my acumen. “ Now you done sed it, it’s plain as day ; ain’t it curious nobody else ever thought uv that outen all the folks that has watched here ? You’re er sharp one, shore.”

I thanked him for the flattery, once more laughingly apologized, and bade him good-by till afternoon. Many times during my walk home I thought that no one but Jim had been near that stump, but I could fathom no possi-

Juletty

ble scheme that he could have concocted to have either filled or exchanged my jug, and finally agreed with him in thinking I had hit upon the means by which it had been accomplished. It would have been an easy job for any skilled woodsman—and all that class in Kentucky are such—to have crawled through the thicket of sumac and scrub oak without attracting attention; the stump was at the very edge, indeed, partially in the thickest of the underbrush, and he might lie there hidden, watching for the moment that was sure to come when he could swiftly, and unobserved, effect his exchange. It was simple enough, but he would not catch me napping again.

By three of the clock that afternoon three horses, saddled and bridled, stood at the door of the Lincque mansion; there was also a light spring wagon. The horses were for Juliet, Jim, and myself; seated in the vehicle, holding the lines over the sleek, fat horses, was a tall, lank, country lout, whose position in the Lincque family, I had discovered, was either that of servant or equal, as the case demanded; he was a poor relative, working on scant wages.

Though ungainly in the extreme, he was an

In Which I Win One Game

interesting person ; he was six feet three inches in height, and was, I suppose, proud of it, for he carried himself well. There was absolutely no flesh on his giant frame, and he would have appeared as a skeleton but for his wonderful development of muscle, which gave him the necessary bulk. I had a few days before seen him swimming, and though I have since looked at Sandow and others of his ilk, I have never seen such knots and cords of muscle as I that day saw on back, arms, and throat.

In amazement I had asked him, "How on earth do you develop it? What immense weights do you lift every day?"

"My work ain't nobody's business," had been his sullen answer.

He had proved on all occasions so curt and morose that I decided to leave him to himself, and that afternoon, happy with Juliet, rode ahead, leaving him to follow with Jim at his leisure. Only once on the way did we wait for them, and then it was that Juliet might assure herself that a small hamper had not been forgotten in the packing of our luncheon, which in baskets and hampers formed the load Al Lincque had in his wagon. To wait for the

Julietty

cousins we had stopped beside a clump of bushes, and they came upon us so unexpectedly that we heard the closing words of what had evidently been an earnest talk. Al was speaking, and he said: "I'll teach Jack Burton to come down here botherin' eround 'ith other people's business"; and his scowl when he found I had heard him was so full of hate that if I had not often seen such before it might have set all my nerves a-tingle. Juliet glanced at me to see if I had indeed heard the threat, and I assumed indifference, though at the same time making a mental note to this effect: "Al Lincque is jealous because Jim has told him I love Juliet (the secret he had boasted of keeping). He is a dangerous man; I will keep my weather eye out for him."

The nutting party was much like all such events in Warren County, especially in the Rich Pond neighborhood. It was a collection of bright, pretty, charming girls, a band of merry, gallant gentlemen, a luncheon fit for royalty's self, and why not? The men were princes by right of manliness and innate nobility, and each girl there was queen of some heart. We had a jolly scamper after nuts, and then, owing to a

In Which I Win One Game

sudden cold change in the variable Kentucky climate, we must needs mount our horses for the ride home before the westering sun said good-night, rather than wait for the moonlight affair we had promised ourselves.

Some young blood while saddling related how his mettlesome steed at a recent fox chase had jumped the Cow Gap in the railway near us and had run like a scared deer down the ties to where the county road intersected the rails. The man waxed excited over the adventure. Said he : " It wasn't any fun, I can tell you. Don't you see how the railroad bed is built up clear from the Gap to the Dirt Road? Why, it's five feet straight down into a ditch on both sides, and if that horse had taken a fancy to turn either to right or to left before we reached the Dirt Road, I would never have known what hurt me. Oh, it was a ticklish situation, and I was scared blue."

The speaker wagged his head. Like all who possess undisputed courage he had not hesitated to acknowledge an acquaintance with fear; only the most arrant cowards deny it. So Charles Russell received the laugh at his expense with utmost good nature. After the

Juletty

merry banter had subsided, Juliet's high, sweet voice said: "Pshaw, Cousin Charles, it was simply because you value that precious neck of yours so highly that you fancied it in danger. I'll take that same leap, and I'll run Gray Flo that same race only to prove what a trifling feat it is. I ask all the crowd to remain right at this place. It is a good half-way point from which you may see the Gap over there at your right, and at your left the junction of railway and Dirt Road is just as plainly visible. I will lay a wager with you, individually and collectively, that she will jump the Gap, and, without dreaming of turning to either side or jumping down the embankment, will keep straight down the middle of the ties till she can take the slope that meets the road so gently as not to stir me in my saddle."

A burst of applause greeted the daring proposal, and I felt proud of my brave young love, so slight and girlish with all her pluck. A few of the older members of our party (we had no chaperon) demurred, and Jim said, "Yer'd better not, Aunt Juliet. Flo's ther biggest fool er livin' when she gets her head."

"She shall not get her head," Juliet laughed

In Which I Win One Game

confidently, and, heedless of warnings, rode away.

As she went off I heard stalwart Al Lincque mutter something about "a piece of darned foolishness," and noticed that he mounted Jim's fiery thoroughbred, took the boy's quirt in his hand, and rode close to the steep embankment at top of which lay the track. I smiled. In the last few weeks I had seen much of Juliet's horsemanship, and had perfect confidence in her ability to come out all right from the rather risky experience she had undertaken, and was therefore surprised to hear Jim say, as he followed his cousin: "'S long as she would do it, she had er better rode my hoss; Flo does get off sometimes. Jock's got ther best bottom, too; Flo's jes' good fer er spurt, an' then she's done."

Those words made me a little uneasy, and I watched Juliet more anxiously; she had ridden on the level some distance above the Gap, where the railway was lower and the embankment less difficult to scale. All eyes were fixed on her, and for the first time I realized that she was doing a foolhardy thing, as she wheeled the mare around and darted towards us.

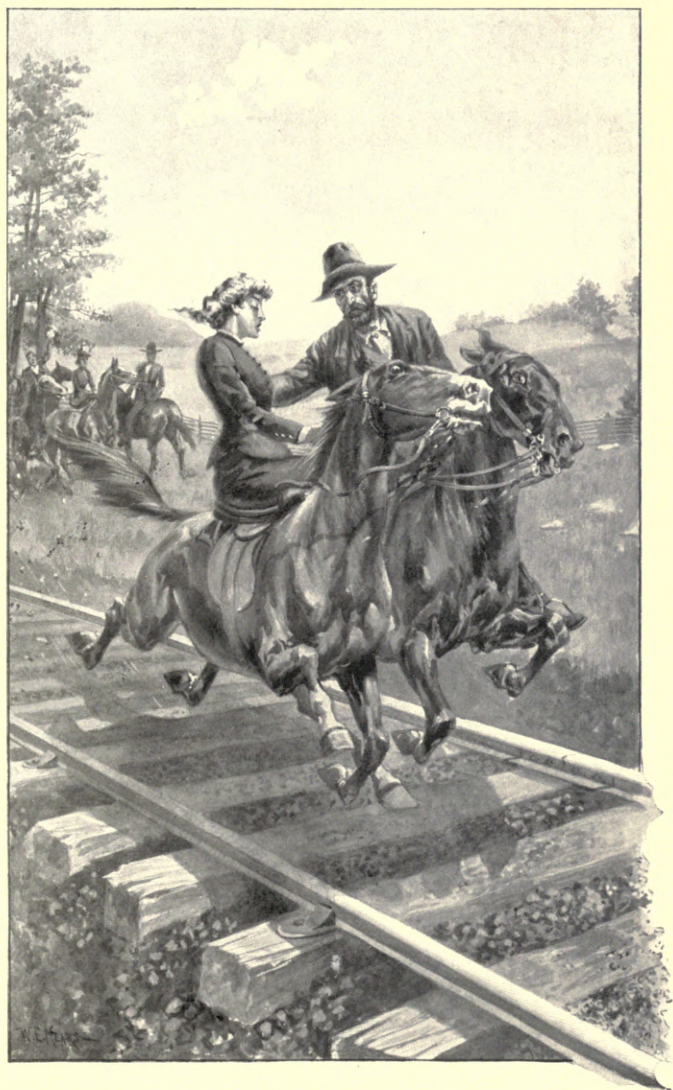
Juletty

Light as a gray feather borne on a gale, they lifted and cleared the Gap. I smiled to see the daring rider wave her hand in token of triumph.

A thrill seemed to go through our party, and they sighed as one, showing how relieved we were, with all our careless ways, to have the only real danger of the affair over, for we knew the ride down the ties meant little. I felt some contempt for Al Lincque that he should have made preparation for disaster. But in another moment I saw that Juliet had lost control of the mare, and she was speeding towards us like shot, unheeding her rider's desperate sawing at the bit.

All could see it as they drew nearer, but a cry of horror broke from us when, in the flash of their passing, Juliet turned her white face to us, and lifted above her head a broken bridle rein. Good God! She was at the fickle brute's mercy. Only one line! And a pull on that meant to be dashed to death in the ditch. I cursed myself for not having restrained her, and for being unable to render her assistance.

Ah, what was that?



In Which I Win One Game

The clatter of other flying hoofs, and the swish, swish, swish, of a riding-whip in merciless use.

Giant Al Lincque, on Jim's big bay, was after them.

Even in that moment of agony I regretted my former contempt.

But what, what could he do?

Nothing.

Every heart stood still.

On, on they flew.

He was gaining; he had caught them; the mare was fagged; in another minute Al would have her rein.

We breathed once more.

Only to have the very blood frozen in our veins as we heard, shrill and clear from around the curve, the whistle of the evening express coming like a winged death to meet the racing pair!

Al might be saved; there was time for that.

No; he put no check on his flying steed, but like a madman urged him on with knee and lash; he was trying to beat the train to the curve, where the Dirt Road meant life to the riders.

Juletty

Unable to scale the embankment, I yet ran after them at the brink of the ditch, and heard Al shout cheerily:

“You’re all right, Juletty; hol’ onter yer pummel and shake off yer sti’up!”

The train had rounded the curve in the distance, and to our agonized vision the goal was about half-way between horses and locomotive; the engineer whistled down brakes, but to stop in time was an impossibility.

Al saw that, dropped the quirt, forged to the mare’s front, rose in his stirrups, leaned sideways, and—like the young Hercules that he was—lifted the girlish figure from the gray, and dashed out to the driveway.

So barely did he escape the wheels of the train that the fireman, in his enthusiasm over the mad daring, hit with his cap the rump of the big bay as he grazed the cab.

The engineer put on steam and fled away; the gray had tumbled ingloriously into the ditch as soon as her mistress left her back, and, strange to say, had arisen and was browsing as contentedly as though outrunning steam engines was a part of her daily regimen.

I walked back to the picnickers with the

In Which I Win One Game

cousins, who dismounted, and they laughed off the thing with equal bravado, though it was a rather quiet party who finished preparations for home-going; our horror was too great to be talked off lightly.

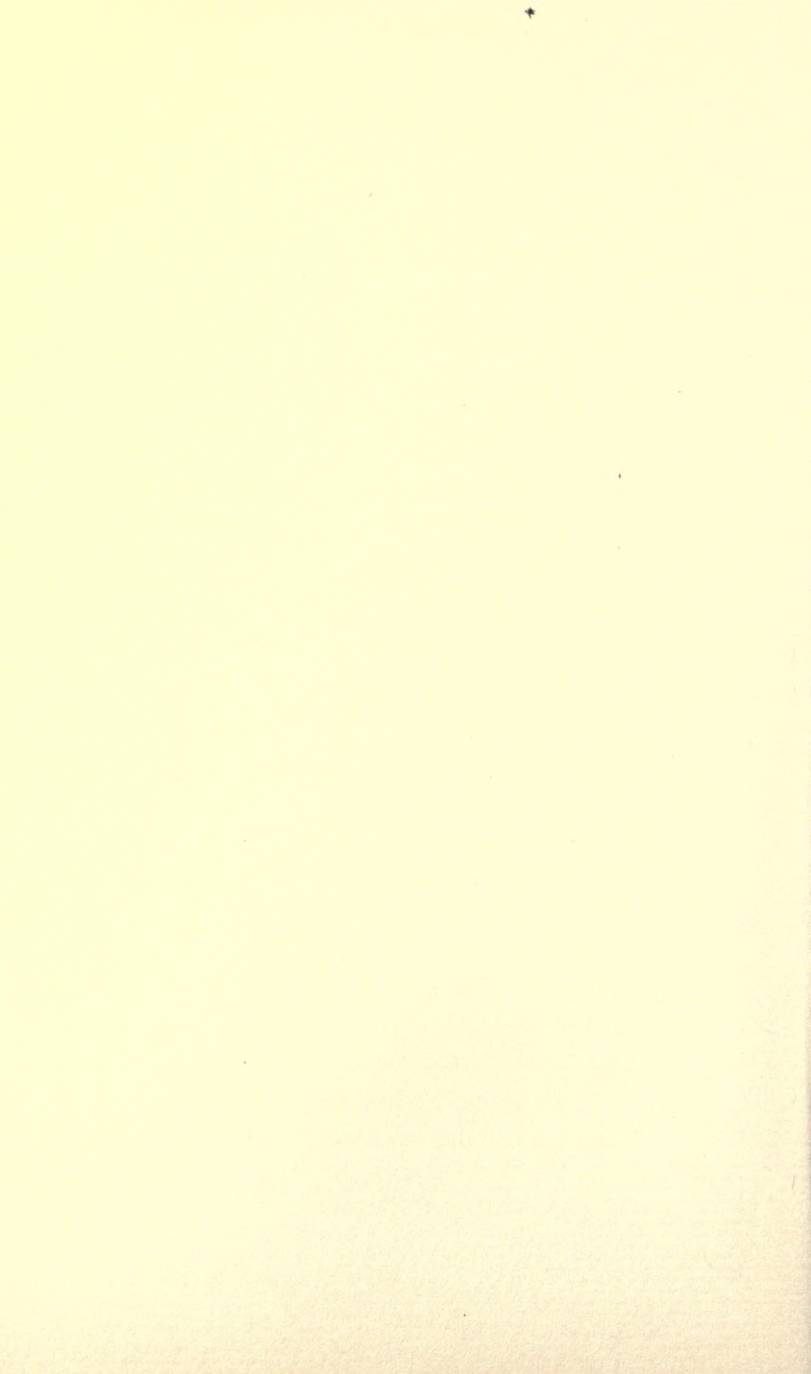
Jim tried to catch Miss Flo, for his aunt insisted on riding her home, but he found it no easy task; she curvetted, pranced, parked, and tossed her pretty head, curling her tail into a silken pompon over her back, and refused to be captured till Juliet herself cajoled her into submission with an apple.

Riding home, we dropped behind the party, and (these matters go quickly in Kentucky, and had I not the ring of a former engagement which proved this but a renewal?) yet—would you believe it?—with my betrothal kiss warm upon my lips I still felt a stir of pity for big Al Lincque, and his disappointment.

Heroes never lose their hold upon us.

CHAPTER V

In Which I Hear Personal Reminiscences
of a Pennyrile Battle



CHAPTER V

IN WHICH I HEAR PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF A PENNYRILE BATTLE

I FOUND a guest at Skileland that evening, when I returned from seeing Juliet safely sheltered after her daring ride. I soon learned that he was a son of an old friend of my grandfather, and had stopped to spend a night with him, as he was on his way South with a drove of mules. He was pleasant, and a good talker. Not wishing to interfere with my grandfather's evident enjoyment of his conversation, I dropped upon the old-fashioned sofa in the hall after supper, knowing that there I would hear every word of what was proving exceedingly interesting to me without being compelled to take part in it. The guest and his host were in perfect accord on all of the important public questions of the day, and so could talk unceasingly; had it been otherwise they would have had to change the subject, for in

Juletty

those days feeling ran too high for a discussion between men of different political creeds to savor of hospitality. My grandfather had always been a strong Union man, and was one of that class of men who gave Kentucky her conservative position during and after the war. He was mind, heart, and soul a Southerner ; yet, at the same time, he strongly condemned secession, and never for one moment faltered in his ardent loyalty to the union of States. As was usual, the talk turned to the war and its issues, and I was an amused listener, while he blessed "Yankees" and "Rebels" alike in lurid capitals, in blissful oblivion of the fact that he occasionally caused his guest to writhe, for all his sympathies went out to the South, right or wrong.

He had asked the stranger many questions concerning the battle at Lebanon, a town that is geographically situated in the centre of the State. Suddenly his interest quickened, and he asked: "Tell me if Myrtledene was injured when Morgan met Hanson at Lebanon. I have not seen an eye-witness to that affair, and have felt a special desire to know if that particular place suffered from the battle, and have under-



I Hear Personal Reminiscences

stood that the house was the central point of a large gathering that day. It is very dear to me ; the builder, Ben Spalding, was one of the best friends of my life, and I well remember when he built the house, in '33; that was the year in which cholera devastated the town, and it was perhaps on that account I so well recall the exact date. Spalding was even then pretty well advanced in years, but had just married a beautiful and brilliant young girl; he was, of course, very proud of her, and any slightest wish of Elizabeth's was as law to him. So it was to please her rather fastidious taste that he built the handsome old colonial dwelling that bears the name of Myrtledene, and there he kept open house for friends and relatives, as well as for the biggest and best men in the entire State. I remember that at one time Elizabeth was anxious that the Synod of her Church should be held in Lebanon, and feared they might not be properly entertained; 'y Gyar, that didn't interfere with Spalding. He managed to get the appointment, and entertained the whole thing at Myrtledene himself; he was a Catholic, too, but he was certainly one of the grandest men who ever lived.

Juletty

"But tell me what you know about it. Were you there on the day of the battle?"

"I was right there; all the time I was not somewhere else," said the guest, lightly.

"Uncle and aunt were in Terre Haute just at that time, for Kentucky was not exactly an asylum to him in those days, and though I was but fifteen years old I had been left to take care of my adopted sister—recently married to a Federal major—and also with the entire responsibility of the large farm and household. The last consisted chiefly of about forty negroes, and had I been at all conscious of the greatness of the undertaking I would have been overwhelmed; but truly, they that know nothing fear nothing, and I was quite willing to shoulder the burden. Myrtledene is situated at the summit of the hill that crowns Spalding Avenue, while the town of Lebanon itself lies in the valley at the base. It is a crooked little city; in fact, it is said that the builders, rather than lay straight new streets, followed the tortuous line of the cowpaths, and a walk down Main Street will convince one that the statement is true. It was in the midst of the town that a regiment of Yankee soldiers

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

was encamped, with headquarters at Shuck's Hall. Du Mont was their commanding officer, and I necessarily saw a great deal of him, but have never been able to fully determine within my own mind whether he was most fool, coward, or knave. Why, I tell you, man, that the next hundred years cannot possibly replace the magnificent forest trees that he had cut down in order that 'nothing should interfere with his glass,' through which he kept constant watch for rebel soldiers. Hundreds of acres of corn were also mowed to the ground for the same reason; it was an utter piece of folly or wanton vandalism, and it was not he, but the citizens of Marion County, who had to pay the fiddler. Well, he didn't keep up that watch for nothing: his patience—or his impatience—was rewarded by news on the Fourth of July. An excited courier rode into town that day with the report of the battle of Green River, more a death-trap than a battle it had been, for on that day 'some one had blundered' as egregiously as at the Charge of the Light Brigade, and with effect almost as disastrous.

"The courier stated that Morgan, with the remnant of his men, was marching on Lebanon,

Juletty

and immediately soldiers and citizens were thrown into the direst panic. I do not think I have ever seen such abject terror: Kentuckians who had taken no active part in the war, but were what were called Union sympathizers, were as terrified at the approach of the Confederates as though they had been fiends incarnate rather than brother Kentuckians, and ran hither and thither in disorder, endeavoring to make plans for the safety of themselves and their households.

“As I told you, I was only fifteen years old, and you doubtless know that boys of that age have no sense of fear whatever. I tell you what I believe: I could take a regiment of boys, from twelve to seventeen years of age, charge ten times their number of veterans of a hundred battles, and lick them every one; they'd fight till the last one was killed, and see and know nothing but the man ahead of them. Well, however that may be, I was not afraid; far from it: I was more than pleased that Morgan, the hero of all Kentucky boys, was on his road to our town. I had long had high aspirations for joining him, had in truth run off twice to do so, but was caught and

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

brought back each time by my father, and I felt pretty sure that with the old folks away my ambition would be realized.

“So it was that I looked forward with pleasantest anticipations to his arrival, and with that thought retired early the night of the Fourth of July that I might be astir promptly the following morning, when I had every hope that the Confederates might have reached us. The heavy sleep of healthy youth held me fast all that night through—by the way, wouldn’t I like to sleep like that now? But at the very gray of the dawning a mocking-bird, that had nested in a cherry tree at my window, called to me in such sweet irresistibleness of wooing that my drowsy eyelids opened and I immediately sprang from my bed. All the rosy banners of the day floated in the East, and yellow-liveried couriers were heralding the approach of the sun; dozens of cat-birds were twittering fretfully at the mocker for having disturbed their slumbers, and the sparrows, as usual, chirped of incessant hunger. I am particular to tell you just how the dawning impressed me with its sense of perfect peace and security, because in recalling it that part

Juletty

appeals especially to my memory: peace, rest, quiet, happiness at the daybreak, succeeded later by battle, hurry, pandemonium, terror. The negroes had been rushing about, I don't know how long—you know a nigger don't think that night was made for sleep, but for frolic—and when I came downstairs breakfast was ready; but, early as it was, we were scarcely seated at the table when guests began to arrive. They came by dozens and scores, breathless with running and pallid from fright; mothers came leading the children that were large enough to walk, and carrying the babies in their arms. It was no hardship to the little ones, but they seemed delighted with a visit to a place where Murillo cherries hung black and thick on full many a tree. It had been suggested to these poor frightened ones that the brick walls of the dwelling at Myrtledene would afford protection, for it was well known that they were twenty-one inches through. Had they stopped to think, they would have known that the top of a hill is a vain place for safety in time of battle, for the shots are almost invariably fired too high, and should that be the case this time the house would prove a

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

veritable target, as its first floors were on a level with the tops of the highest buildings in the town below.

“But they had no time for thought, or, perhaps, did not know this, and the stream of people continued to pour in till five or six hundred were packed into the various rooms, and then some over-zealous soul thought of the large cellar. They came to me and asked for the key, which I readily gave up to them, and the most timorous of the crowd sought safety down there.

“Among the very first of the number to go down was a handsome, dashing young Federal captain. I am confident that a man was never nearer frightened literally to death than the gallant captain; he was white as a sheet, and his trembling made his sword dance a jig in its scabbard, so that, like the old woman with rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, the captain had music wherever he went. Talking was a tremulous business with him, but he did manage to put up a plea to some of his friends to change clothes with him, but the favor was respectfully declined, though I heard no thanks.

Juletty

“Failing, therefore, in his scheme for a disguise, he sought the cellar and stayed there, cowering behind the skirts of the women each time the cellar door opened to admit another scared individual. I felt as if I had suddenly grown considerably when I found myself host of so many guests, and ran about gayly intent on hospitable duties, and issuing orders to Tenie and Maria, the cooks, to have something for the crowd to eat.

“You may be sure Hanson had been busy all this time, and had stationed pickets at all entrances to the town. Now, if you remember, Myrtledene faces that point on Spalding Avenue where the Springfield and St. Rose pikes converge, and, with the intention of guarding these two pikes, sentries had been placed on our lawn, in the far corner of which stood the carriage-house. It was behind this house that a little blue-coated picket, terribly excited, settled himself for his watch. My heart sank within me when I saw him and his full cartridge-belt, for I thought if Morgan should discover him on the lawn, and the poor, trembling captain in the cellar, there would be no power to save the house from being burned.

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

Of course I wanted to take better care than that of property left in my charge, and so I appealed to the little Yankee to locate across the street from us, urging that he afford the women and children in the house the assured protection of his *absence*. I couldn't do a thing with him, however ; a little brief authority had swollen his head, and he scorned the advice of a schoolboy. While I still stood talking with him, my schoolmate and chum, Bob Clelick, came running from town with news that the "Rebels" were on us, and had already reached his house, which stood in the suburbs, on the Campbellsville pike, almost at a right angle from Myrtledene. Then we heard the measured beat, beat, beat of the drum, and, mounting to our roof, could see them marching. What cared we that the bullets were whizzing, with their dull swish, past our ears, and death was in each of them, as long as we saw that inspiring sight of men in battle array ! Like some huge gray serpent, with its tail fastened in place, they uncoiled into line, and, dropping the impeding fences, crossed the fields and proceeded to surround the town. It was to me a most fascinating spectacle ; from the Campbellsville

Juletty

to the St. Mary's pike the battle was on, though it interfered no whit with the movements of that writhing gray serpent that stoically wriggled on across the green fields. Over the Graham place, thence across the Rogers farm, it crept, and came measuredly down the St. Rose pike, straight toward Myrtledene. It was then, to my great wrath and indignation, that the little sentry at the carriage-house got in his bit of work. He'd dart out, fire at the advancing column, bring down his man either wounded or dead, and dart back to hide and load up again. As soon as I realized what he was up to, I left the roof and went to him. I coaxed, cajoled, ordered, swore, cried, to get him to stop the dirty job, but all to no avail. He fired several shots even as I stood there talking to him, and then to my great relief his ammunition gave out, and he fled to town for more, thus saving his measly little neck, which the Confederates would, rightly enough, have stretched had they discovered him.

"Scarcely had he got out of sight when two of the soldiers in gray stopped at the fence and dismounted; one of them was a great, big, handsome fellow, who was laughing and talking

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

merrily, though I noticed he kept one arm pressed stiffly around his bowels, and I soon learned it was to hold them in place.

“A shot had struck him in the side and ranged across his abdomen, absolutely disembowelling him except for that protecting arm. The other was a slight, wiry, nervous man, whose face was ashen from pain, though I could see no evidence of a wound about him, except that he limped sadly. He asked for the support of my shoulder in walking, and I gave it to him gladly, only too willing to propitiate them in any way I could, lest they seek revenge on that death-spitting little rifle by burning the house. I soon had them both seated on their blankets under a large oak that grew to the right of the centre of the lawn; the fellow, whose bleeding entrails were hard to keep in place and made him a ghastly sight, kept up his joking and laughing, while the other, apparently so little hurt, moaned, groaned, and cursed his fate.

“‘Where are you hurt?’ I asked him.

“With my assistance he answered by pulling off his ragged shoe and showing in his sockless foot a bullet hole; the ball had penetrated the outer ankle bone of his right foot. It seemed

Juletty

to me a small and insignificant wound, and I so told him.

“ ‘ But, oh, my God ! how it does hurt ! ’ he groaned.

“ ‘ Have you got any whiskey in the house, Bud ? If there is any there, for the love of Heaven bring it to me. ’

“ There was a full demijohn in the hall closet, and I had not liked that it should be known, fearing the crowd might use it, but the man’s intensity of suffering was more than I could bear to see without some attempt to alleviate it. So, attracting as little attention to my movements as possible, I slipped into the little closet under the stairway and secured a brimming glass of the liquor, which I brought out to the two. They swallowed it greedily, and lay back on their blankets more quietly ; but they had not long to stay there. In a few hours their comrades had time to come for them, and they were removed and made comfortable at the Presbyterian church, which had been converted into a hospital for wounded and sick soldiers. And, sir, it’s hard to believe, but in three days the fellow with the mite of a hole in his ankle was dead of lockjaw, while

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

the other, who had his bowels shot out of him, joined his command inside of three weeks. As soon as the Confederates had found it possible to do so they had placed a small cannon immediately in front of the gate at Myrtledene, some hundred yards from the house, and it was kept firing as rapidly as it could be discharged and reloaded. A Mrs. Hibbard, wife of a Yankee colonel, was in a bedroom on the ground floor, and as fast as the cannon fired she fainted ; the promptness with which she keeled over at each shot would have been ludicrous had we not been too excited to see the absurdity of it. I was much exercised lest the constant jar should injure the walls of the house, and went around to a rear porch to consult my stepmother as to what I should do in regard to it. She sat there, eating peaches, as coolly as if battles were a part of her daily life, talking baby nonsense to an infant child of Colonel Hibbard's that lay on a quilt at the end of the porch. She was a beautiful baby, and, like all people, I was attracted by her, and whistled as I passed, and snapped my fingers at her ; she cooed and laughed, and held out her little hands. I returned in a few moments, and was

Juletty

just in time to see a great, burly fellow urging his horse with whip and spur onto the porch, and saw him succeed in riding immediately over the laughing child; but the horse, being the gentler of the two brutes, stepped carefully over her, and the child was not hurt.

“My blood boiled as I snatched the little creature up and tossed her into a woman’s arms; then I turned and caught the wretch’s bridle, and with the strong arm of a farmer boy backed his horse off the porch. He was furious at what he was pleased to call my ‘cussed interference,’ swore at me viciously, and finally, when he found I was too much in earnest to be bullied, pulled his pistol from his pocket and snapped it in my face. It was the first time I had ever looked down the muzzle of a revolver when it was in the hands of an enemy, and I was no end glad when it only flashed in the pan because of wet powder. But by that time the wrath of my self-possessed young stepmother was blazing, and she sprang to her feet and cried indignantly: ‘If you hurt that boy I will see that you suffer severely for it. I will go to John Morgan myself; he is my cousin, and he will see that I am given justice.’

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

“Her words and the threat to inform Morgan of his ill-conduct carried weight, and the scoundrel turned his horse and, still swearing, left us in peace. I afterward learned from Morgan’s chief surgeon that the fellow was one St. Leger, either a Frenchman or an Englishman, my informant did not remember which. This surgeon also told me that he could not at all understand St. Leger’s conduct on that day, as he had found him as brave a man as he ever saw, and always respectful to women.

“After this little episode my chum Bob and I went back to the roof, which we had entirely to ourselves, the older men having no fancy to have bullets constantly zoo, zoo, zooing about their heads. The distance to the battle was such that we only saw the direst confusion, and nothing at all satisfactory, so that when it ceased, except for an occasional shot, Bob proposed that I accompany him, and we would go across a field or two that intervened and reach his home, where he had every reason to believe the battle had been hottest. I immediately agreed to do so, for there was no resisting the temptation to get a closer view, and we de-

Juletty

scended to solid ground once more, where the news greeted us that the Yankees had surrendered and Morgan was in possession of the town. This more than pleased me; but Bob was a little dubious as to what might follow. I felt rather uneasy as to what would become of the place in the absence of so powerful a protector as myself, but I was simply bound to go with Bob, and see what was doing and what had been done in that part of the world whence had come that babel of fighting all day. We announced our intention to a few women who questioned us about it, and with tears they warned us against the foolhardy freak; but we were not to be deterred, and went on across the fields to the new depot that was then the terminus of the Louisville and Nashville Railway, recently run to Lebanon. Exaggerated reports of the vast and bitter Union sentiment had reached the ears of the Confederates before they reached the town, and they were bent on doing all the damage they possibly could to personal property. This they resolved on without the consent of their officers, who, as soon as they were made cognizant of the fact, put a stop to it. But they were still looting when Bob

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

and I crossed the street near the depot, and we saw men with bolts of ribbon and calico tied to their saddles or pinned to their hats, and floating out on the breeze as they galloped their horses at a mad pace up and down the roads. Uncut cans of all sorts of eatables had been thrown about, and to our delectation we discovered a large box of raisins that had been tossed away after a few bunches had been taken out. Bob caught it up in delight, and went for it, saying: 'I never did have as many raisins as I could eat in my life, and now I'll remedy the matter.' And he did. It truly appeared that the brothers would destroy what the invaders had left. We passed the depot and walked down the railway a couple of hundred yards, perhaps, and then left it to spring lightly across a little brook that rippled along between its grassy banks, still babbling sweetly of the peace it had left in the hills, as though it had not witnessed strife and bloodshed on that fair day. Do you know, I can't help noticing those things and fancying that mother Nature means them as gentle rebukes to her human children for their many wrongdoings. If Bob noticed it he said nothing about it, and for that matter neither

Juletty

did I, but we both went plodding along, pretty hot by the time we reached the plank fence which enclosed the small meadow that lay at the foot of the precipitous hill on whose top Bob's home was situated. When we got that far we were glad to stop half-way over and sit on the top plank for a long breath, and to fan ourselves with our straw hats. The day was as hot as if straight from sheol. Scarcely were we seated when the most deafening report that had that day saluted my ears split the air, and we were knocked from our perches on the fence and sent reeling for at least twenty paces.

"I wondered if we were killed ; and if we were killed I wondered what had done it. On feeling ourselves and waking thoroughly from the shock we had experienced we found we were not at all hurt, and proceeded to inquire into the cause of the explosion. The Confederates were destroying what Federal ammunition and guns they could not carry with them, and that hideous din that had been so nearly the death of us was occasioned by the bursting of a small brass cannon which the soldiers had turned over from the railway, and a piece of which

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

had struck the top plank of the panel of fence next the one on which we were seated, tearing it completely in pieces and shocking us severely. It was a pretty close call, as you will see, and it sobered us more than any of the events that had preceded it on that very eventful day. It was therefore with slower steps we climbed that steep hillside and entered cautiously the parson's back yard. It was in front of his gate that the battle had begun and had waged fiercest, and we did not know how many more cannon might be ready to burst thereabouts. We peeped ahead carefully, and went half on tip-toe till we got around the corner of the house, where we saw a spectacle so pitiful that we forgot all caution. Stretched on the ground, under a great aspen tree that grew beside the carriage drive immediately opposite the door, lay a ragged, dishevelled boy; he could not have been more than fourteen or fifteen years old. His arms were tossed easily above his head as if in sleep, and his dusty gray cap had fallen off, so that the laughing wind played lightly with the auburn curls that clustered in a thousand rings about his shapely head and broad, fair brow.

Juletty

“There were scarcely any soles to his dusty shoes, and the linen that he wore, though fine and dainty originally, was soiled and frayed. But however much the march and stain of battle had besmirched him, there could be no doubt but that he had been tenderly reared and cared for; it was written large upon him. Some mother’s darling he surely was; and soft mother lips had many times kissed close in slumber the half-open lids that now revealed a pair of brown eyes staring piteously. I stepped softly over the grass to his side and took up the dusty, worn cap, to place it as a shield over his eyes, when I saw for the first time a small, dark spot just between the delicate line of his eyebrows; it was a bullet hole no larger than the tip of my smallest finger, and through it protruded a bloody bit of gray. He was dead. But I knelt beside him, and laid my ear close against his breast, listening for the heart-throbs I knew I would not hear, and looked intently at the still smiling, beardless lips as though I hoped he might speak, though I knew they would never move again in boyish laughter or to whisper ‘mother’ to the ear that deemed that sound the sweetest of the

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

world. She would not know, might never know, how he had died, or where; she would not know that his had been a hero's death, and she would watch and long for him till time would kill the hope and break her faithful heart.

"Oh, how the pity of it all swept over me!

"And kneeling there, my head upon his breast, I sobbed aloud.

"Bob touched me on the shoulder—dear old Bob, who said so little and felt and did so much.

"‘Let's take him in,’ he said, ‘and fix him up a little and ask father to make a sort of preach over him and bury him like a gentleman.’

"Bob's father was the pastor of the church that had been turned into a soldiers' hospital, and we boys knew he could be depended on to do the right and kindly thing for the young fellow. I couldn't speak; the vision of the boy's waiting mother was too literally present with me for that; but I got up from my knees, and we lifted the boy between us, I taking the head in my arms as gently as if he had been my only brother whom I worshipped. Bob slipped his strong young arms under the poor,

Juletty

limp knees, and together we bore him into the hallway of the manse and laid him on the floor. I was rather uncertain what should be the next step in our plan, but Bob was not at all so ; he meant what he had said, and was going to lay the dead in the parlor. So when we had placed him momentarily on the hall floor, Bob advanced and opened the parlor door to take him in there ; but after doing so he hesitated, as if he had met with a surprise. I advanced to his side and looked over his shoulder ; death was already there.

“ Three or four chairs had been placed side by side in the middle of the room, and stretched on the improvised bier lay a dead Confederate soldier.

“ Like all of Morgan’s command that day, he was shabbily clad, dusty, and unclean.

“ These men were willing not only to die (that is a little thing), but to suffer all things for the cause they loved.

“ A blood-stain on the shirt-front of the soldier showed where he had been shot ; it was through his true, loyal heart.

“ There were six or eight men in the room, but they sat around in moody silence, not knowing

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

what to do, either with themselves or with the dead. A movement of relief went through the party when Bob and I put in our appearance, and one of the men beckoned to me. I went to him, and he inquired :

“ ‘ Do you live in this house ? ’

“ ‘ No,’ I told him; ‘ but my friend does,’ and I called Bob to him.

“ ‘ Bub,’ he said, when Bob came respectfully near, ‘ we want to lay this man out decently ; he’s Tom Morgan, General John Morgan’s younger brother, and as brave a boy as ever died for his country and his rights. Can’t you bring us some water and towels ? ’

“ The man had almost broken down when he called his young leader by name, and when he ceased speaking he drew the back of his hand across his eyes.

“ Bob assured him that he would have the best the house afforded, and soon brought it forth in abundance.

“ The fact that the dead man was General Morgan’s brother aroused our keenest interest, as I have said. Morgan was the Kentucky boy’s beau-ideal of all that a soldier should be in those days. So after we had brought into

Juletty

the same room the dead boy we had left on the floor of the hall, and had disposed of him with all the care we could, we spent the time watching the slower motions of the soldiers engaged in the last sad duties to the other boy. Tom Morgan was as handsome a man as I ever put these two eyes on ; a mere lad, he was, but a perfect athlete in development ; and when they had stripped him for his last bath, he lay there like a marble Apollo, with but one blemish about him—the wound in his noble heart.

“ Of course nobody knew exactly how he met his death, farther than it was from a Federal bullet ; and there have been many surmises as to it. Some have thought that he was killed by a glancing bullet which had first struck an iron lamp-post near where he fell, but I am satisfied that is a mistake. I formed this opinion from the nature of the wound, which I had ample opportunity to examine as the men worked about him. I think he was walking down the street, and was facing the death-dealing missile, for the wound was very small, and the bullet must have entered on a straight line and pierced and buried itself in his heart. After the men had brushed with utmost care

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

his uniform of gray, and even taken a few stitches in it, it was put back on him; the soiled linen had previously been replaced by some that Bob had brought of his father's, and then one of the men opened the door and spoke in low tones to a man who had been walking impatiently up and down in the hall during the time we had been busy with the bodies.

"This man entered the room, walked close to the dead, and stood a minute looking at him steadily; and then, burying his face in his hands, he shook as the aspen leaves outside had shaken in their grief over the other unknown one.

"That was John Morgan weeping for his dead young brother. In a few moments he regained his self-control, and again began that stormy walk: up and down, up and down, up and down he strode. He had marched all the preceding night, had fought the bloodiest battle of his campaign the day before, and had ordered the fight that day without rest and with but little food, yet his agony of grief had made him oblivious to fatigue, and he tramped, tramped, tramped, like a newly caged lion. Occasionally he brought his clenched fists down sharply to

Juletty

his sides and muttered through his grinding teeth :

“ ‘ I’ll make them pay for this, damn them! I’ll make them pay for it.’

“ At last he threw himself on his knees beside the humble bier, and clasped the still, unresponsive figure in his great, strong arms, and gave way to all the passionate outburst of his feeling.

“ ‘ A hundred thousand of their cursed lives cannot atone for this, my brother, my little brother, I was to care for and bring safe home! Oh, Tom, Tom, how can I tell our mother?’

“ I never want to see misery like that again.

“ We buried both the boys that evening in the parson’s garden, side by side. I do not know whether they have been removed elsewhere or not, but I suppose they have ; at least I fancy Morgan was taken away. But I hope if it is so that they took the other friendless one also, and that they still sleep together, for they were a gallant pair. That evening, to the great horror of the citizens, Morgan ordered that the town should be burned. He was so frenzied with grief and rage at his brother’s death that he was really scarcely accountable for what he did. There was no need to urge it; the soldiers were

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

almost as enraged as their general, and they at once set to work to carry out his orders in the matter, and several dwellings were destroyed by fire. But they either failed to inquire, and so do their work in some sort of systematic way, or else there was no partisan feeling whatever in what they did, for about the first house that they set fire to was the property of a woman who was as devoted to the South as any one of the whole brave band of women who gave money, time, and labor to the Lost Cause.

“Wiser counsel, however, prevailed with the general later in the evening, and the order for the burning was countermanded in time to save Myrtledene, the property of your old friend, and it sustained no farther injury than a few broken windows and a shattered lattice. It was an almost miraculous escape, too, when one considers how it was situated and surrounded.

“But to the amusement of the entire community, the redoubtable captain, of cellar notoriety, was too badly frightened to emerge from his subterranean abode for the next several days, even after all possible danger had passed, and my sister took his meals down to him three

Juletty

times a day, and caused the negroes to arrange a comfortable cot there for him to sleep on.

"The following morning Morgan left Lebanon and went on through Springfield, which road, you will remember, took him immediately past the gate at Myrtledene. Black folks and white folks assembled at the front to watch the men go by, and he had a large number of Yankee prisoners. These were put in line on foot, between the rows of Confederate cavalry, and I tell you they drove them at a pretty good gait. The broken-down condition of the horses of the Confederates was such that they could not much more than get up a trot, though that made lively walking for the Federal infantry."

"Well," interrupted my grandfather, drawing a deep sigh that was evidence of the sincere interest he had felt in his guest's narration of the events of the memorable day in Lebanon—"well, I wish Morgan hadn't done that; there was no need for such inhumanity as driving prisoners afoot that hot July weather, and for a distance of nine miles too."

"Right there is where you are mistaken, my friend. There was the direst need in the world; the Federal hosts were coming in full

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

force to the relief of the town. Morgan's men were exhausted and their numbers were depleted and wholly unfit for further fighting just then, so that leaving the place was a necessity. As to taking the prisoners on foot, there was only a choice left between taking them in that way or leaving them behind altogether—a course he certainly could not have been expected to pursue. His own men were poorly mounted; sometimes, indeed, there were two soldiers to one horse, and that made it impossible to mount the Federals. I fancy had many another man been in Morgan's place they would have fared much worse than they did; they had given provocation enough, Heaven knows. There had been some grievous outrages perpetrated in the South just at that time by Federals; women had been grossly insulted, and prisoners most foully dealt with. His brother's death certainly did not tend to soften him on that particular occasion, and, taken all in all, I have no kick against what he did. Never did a more capable or gallant cavalrman sit in a saddle, and he commanded the bravest regiment that ever fired a volley—heroes every one."

Juletty

“Morgan was from the Blue Grass himself, but I believe he had a large number of men from the Pennyryle, did he not?”

“That’s what he did. And the very blossom of the Pennyryle, too. His surgeon was a Lebanon man, and the night after the battle he supped with my father at Myrtledene. The whole family sat open-mouthed and open-eyed till late bedtime as he spun us yarns about the affairs he had witnessed in the raid, as some people choose to call Morgan’s triumphal march. He had so lately witnessed the bloody affair at Green River he could scarcely talk about it; but I remember one incident he related at which we every one laughed and cried together. He said that in some skirmish he had ridden alone some distance, having been left behind to care for the wounded, and when he caught up with the regiment he found it in disorder. The first man he could speak with was Hunt, of Lexington. He said when he came up with Hunt he found him walking up and down on the bank of a little ravine, wringing his hands and crying aloud, with all the demonstration of a whipped child. He rode up to him and asked, with a great deal of anxiety:

I Hear Personal Reminiscences

“‘Why, Colonel Hunt, what in the world is the matter?’

“‘Matter!’ shouted the colonel, turning on the doctor with all the desperation of tragedy, ‘matter! Why, I’ve exhorted my men till I am hoarse and worn out, and they won’t charge, damn ’em.’

“That was an amazing piece of information to the doctor; he had never heard of any difficulty in getting the men to charge. Wondering what the trouble could be, he rode a little farther along to a turn in the road, and there, not far away, came the Federals—at least a thousand of them. It was a rather perturbing sight, with the assurance from the colonel that the men positively refused to charge.

“He rode back, and looking at the few ragged, tired soldiers in gray collected around their commander, decided that if he could get them together he would try to rally the force.

“‘Come, colonel,’ he said, trying to infuse as much cheer into his tones as he could, ‘how many men have you?’

“The colonel was still sobbing, and, rubbing his eyes, he looked up. ‘There they are,’ he said; ‘I’ve got eleven of them, the gray devils!’

Juletty

And do what I may they won't charge, damn 'em !'

"Eleven !

"Eleven men ! Eleven tired, broken, hungry, tattered soldiers. And weeping that they would not consent to drown themselves in that blue sea that was advancing in billows to obliterate them ! The doctor cried as he told it, but laughed, too, at the pitiful, the pathetic absurdity of it."

Grandfather was half laughing, half crying, as his guest told him the story, and inquired at its close :

"Colonel Hunt, you say ? I suppose that he is now Judge Hunt, of Lexington ?"

"Yes ; the same."

"Well, that being the man, I am not at all surprised at his tears or his pluck ; in fact, the only surprising part of it is that he did not succeed in getting the eleven to charge as he wished them to."

That story was the last I wished to hear, and I sank asleep on my sofa ; and when I awakened I found the house quiet and in darkness, so crept off to bed.

CHAPTER VI

In Which the Game Traps the Hunter

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH THE GAME TRAPS THE HUNTER

THOUGH the days were full of happiness I was not therefore idle, but was constantly prosecuting my search for the illicit still, or laying plans to do so. I confess I had never found myself so at sea for clues; though now and then some suspicion forced itself into my mind I was soon compelled to abandon it on account of its absurdity or impossibility. I knew it would require some pretty shrewd detective ability to unearth a man with whom a whole community sympathized, not through lawlessness, but because they considered him right and the Government mistaken. Grandfather twitted me with my failure, making me more resolute in my determination to succeed.

In my every movement Mitch was my sworn ally; curiously for a negro, he was a stanch temperance man, and he readily assisted me to further the cause he advocated.

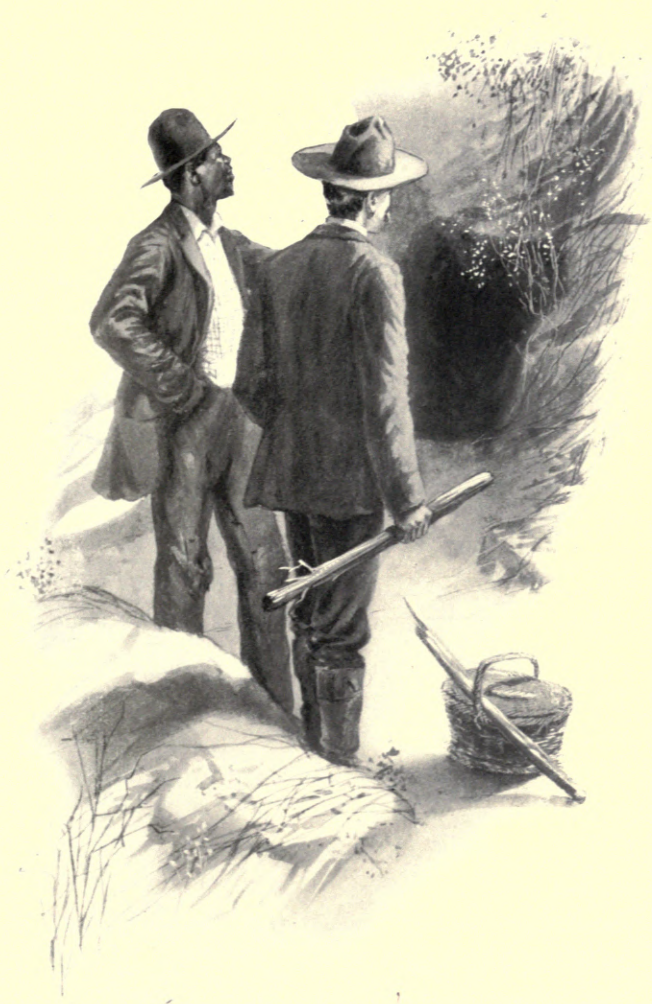
Juletty

We reached the same conclusion, which was that the still was surely hidden in one of the numerous caves that underlie that entire country like huge natural sewers, and my ardor in exploring those holes in the ground would have won a decoration from any self-respecting body of rats or moles.

Mitch met me one sunny day, hat in hand, and volunteered to lead me through "one uv de bigges' ones yit," so with luncheon and torches we made off. I felt a moment's hesitancy when he stopped at a hole that looked hardly large enough to admit my body, and announced, "Thar she is."

Then, thinking I could stand it if Mitch could, besides being rather ashamed to back out after arousing his enthusiasm, I dropped on hands and knees and crawled in, moving slowly on in this beastly fashion. Mitch, who had not then started, declared, "This is yer las' chanct, Marse Jack; dar ain't nary nudder cave eroun' dis country, an' ef yer don' fin' her ter-day yer's a gone coonskin shore."

"If that is true, Mitch, and this is really the only cave we have not already searched, we will find that still right here and now, and you



In Which the Game Traps the Hunter

shall have the Government reward, every cent, Mitch, for your faithful work."

A low chuckle smote upon my ears as daylight disappeared, and I thought I heard a voice say, "Not if I know myself."

So sure was I that I had heard the grewsome laugh and speech that I asked, "Did you speak, Mitch?"

"No, sir, I ain't said nuffin'; whut yer laughin' at, Marse Jack?"

I was not mistaken, then; I had heard the chuckle and the threat—the laugh, as Mitch called it—and in some way the sounds reminded me of Al Lincque.

We had to crawl some distance through the long, narrow throat of the cavern, and I had grown impatient of the cramped position before we reached a room where we might stand upright once more and light our torches. Their red glare illuminating the darkness revealed the usual sights of caves—stalactites, stalagmites, rocky sides, trickling water, gleaming quartz—but no trace whatever of any man having been there before us. We walked on slowly, for I enjoyed the sight of the purity and whiteness of the unstained walls, and

Juletty

thought it a pity that devastating man should ever despoil them, as he would some day. We turned, now this way, now that, as in a labyrinth, and had not Mitch been more thoughtful than I and fastened a ball of twine at the entrance we should have certainly been lost.

We had trudged about for some time when Mitch paused and announced positively: "Dar ain't nary bit er use'n us goin' one step farder; kase why, ef dat ar sarned still hed eber been hyar, dar'd er been dirt an' smoke an' truck all erlong dese hyar walls. Min' whut I done tole yer, mon, dar ain't no still down hyar."

I sighed, but had to agree with him in the face of such evidence, and we turned and groped our way back. Suddenly my guide stopped. "What is the matter, Mitch?" I cried.

The darkey turned and stared at me stupidly, as he said mysteriously, "I don' know whut's de matter, Marse Jack; hyar's some'in I cain't un'erstan'. We done gotter de en' uv de twine, but dar ain't no daylight dar."

I was startled, and with some apprehension flashed my torch in front of the negro; there

In Which the Game Traps the Hunter

certainly was the end of the twine still securely fastened as he had left it, but, as he had said, there was no sign of daylight. My heart gave a sickening little throb as I dropped to my knees and crawled through the narrow first passage, but it was only to find the entire mouth blocked by a stone. I pushed at it vigorously, but uselessly; then I remembered that near the entrance I had sat upon an immense slab of rock, say three by fifteen feet in surface, and at least one foot in thickness. I at once realized that the rock had been thrown or had fallen across the mouth of the cave in such a way as to completely close it and shut us in. I told Mitch to slip his great body into the narrow space beside me, and together we might dislodge the imprisoning bulk. He did so, and we braced our feet against the wall with both backs against the rock, and strove till our muscles were near to bursting; but in vain.

Mitch ground his teeth in fury and fear, and I racked my brain for some plan of escape. I glanced at the negro and saw his face was ashen with horror, and began to talk with assumed cheerfulness—Heaven knows I felt none. I said, "I suppose there has been a

Juletty

storm since we came down ; it has been wonderfully quiet here, sure, but nothing but the force of a most terrific tempest could have dislodged that huge stone and cooped us up here like mice in a trap."

Mitch was contemptuous of my suggestion, and said that he knew. "Dar's been too many tempeses er snortin' and er cavortin' roun' hyar dout er movin' dat ar rock all dese years fer 'em ter be er doin' ub it now. Some man seen us er comin' hyar an' done it fer er joke ; some fools don' know nothin' 'bout jokes nohow ; dis ain' no sorter kinder joke. I bet one thing ; I bet I done taken it outen his hide when we does git out."

I shuddered at Mitch's suggestion that a man had fastened us in the horrid place, and thought of the ominous words I had heard when we entered the cave, recalled the familiar tones of the voice, and yet tried to speak cheerily to my companion: "If a tempest could not shake that stone over, Mitch, what man could accomplish it?"

"Al Lincque, er big, strong debble!" was the instant response. Then in the red glare of our torches he turned his troubled face to

In Which the Game Traps the Hunter

mine. "Is he got ennything ergin yer?" he asked.

I only nodded assent.

"Den dar ain't no use fer us er settin' hyar er foolin'; he's de berry man whut sot de stone at de do' uv dis seplecher, an' I'll be boun' yer one thing—dar ain' no angels loafin' roun' dar wid nuffin ter do but ter roll hit away. Ef we-all ever git outen hyar we's gotter do it ourse'ves; an' I tell you right now, mon, we gotter hussle. I'se gwineter put out my light an' save hit fer hard times, so you'll havter come erlong an' hold yourn; I 'member er big oak cudgel back yonner sommers, an' if it's stout ernuff fer er lever, I'se gwinter git outen hyar. An' mor'n dat, if de Lawd spars me I'm done still-huntin'. But one thing sartin, if I does lib ter git outen hyar, I'll break eber bone in Al Lincque's cyarcase. Good fer nothin' po' white trash!"

I could not repress a smile at a threat so dire and so characteristic under circumstances so hopeless as I led the way back into the cave with my single light. The place had lost all attraction, and we walked in silence. After some time we arrived at the junction of two

Juletty

paths, and as is usual under such conditions, we differed as to which turn we had taken on the former trip. Hunger and weariness had begun to tell on my temper, and I insisted I was right with a stubbornness not to have been expected or excused, urging that we had before gone into the right gallery and would there find the oaken cudgel we had wished. Mitch was equally persuaded that his memory was correct, and we had gone to the left. However, as is unfailingly the case, the will of the white man controlled, and Mitch followed me, against his judgment.

A twenty minutes' walk satisfied me I was the mistaken party this time, but I wilfully persisted in going ahead until we reached an acute angle whose strangeness was so evident that I had to acknowledge defeat. By that time my feet were sore, and every muscle ached with the exertion of the long walk and the strain I had made in trying to remove the rock at the entrance.

"I am too tired to move one more step, Mitch," I said; "I simply must sit down here and rest. You may go on and leave me; I do not believe we will find a way out anyway,"

In Which the Game Traps the Hunter

and half fretful, half despairing, I sank down upon the rock floor.

The need to comfort me brought back Mitch's self-control, and he seated himself beside me, saying in a wistful way :

" No, sir, Marse Jack, I ain't gwinter leave yer, yer can shore 'pen on dat ; but I does pintly wush we-all had some'in ter eat."

I looked at my watch. We had been in the cave ten hours ; I had not at all realized it, and the fact made me more than ever hopeless.

" Mitch," I said, " I cannot tell you how sorry I am for this misfortune ; it is all because of my persistent search, and I have cost you your life by it. If I might save you by giving up my own I would gladly do it."

" Aw, sher !" said he, bravely bracing up when he heard the husk in my voice. " I ain't gwinter stay in hyar and die ; no, sir, doncher neber bliebe it ; I'se gwinter fin' some way ; ole Mitch ain' neber been in no hole yit whut he couldn't git outen. Sides, Providence ain' gwinter let ole marster's son git shet up an' die like er rat in er hole by sech po' white trash es them Lincques. Then, yer know, ef I didn'

Juletty

git cher ouden hyar, Marse Alec 'd kill me, he would shore, mon."

The assurance of being killed by man if he never got out of the cave was too much for me, and as I could not laugh I must needs break down and cry like a little child, and tell Mitch how I wished we had saved the scraps of our luncheon. Then, to recover my emotion, I stepped around that angle which had convicted me of error in my route. A breath of fresh air kissed my face. A few steps farther, and the stars were winking and blinking at me in derision of my fears, when I should have known they awaited me outside.

I called Mitch, and the joy in my voice must have betrayed my good tidings, for as he staggered to me I heard him mutter :

"Bress Gawd ; I knowed He wouldn' let 'at scum of de yeth hu't Miss 'Liza's chile."

Al had failed in his scheme to bury me alive. only because the cave had two entrances.

I would watch him more carefully in the future.

CHAPTER VII

In Which I Join a Man Hunt

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH I JOIN A MAN HUNT

A WARM spell brightened the January weather.

Snow disappeared, and there was not even a suggestion of frost in the atmosphere; birds sang and hopped about, merry and busy as new-made wives, and the leaf buds on bush and tree were swollen to birth-giving time. Knowledge that a drop in temperature was sure to come had no power to prevent our enjoying to the utmost the warmth of the day. Grandfather sat through the noontides in the open door, solemnly swearing that he had renewed his youth, and offering as proof—"I've got spring fever, and hate the thought of work as bad as any young cub of sixteen; then, too, I've fallen in love with the madame over again, and your greatest poet says it's a young man's fancy that turns to thoughts of love in the spring—so there you have me, young as the youngest."

Juletty

He showed the influence of his spring fever by retiring at an unconscionably early hour, thus sending me to my room, where I usually spent the evening reading. But on the occasion of which I am going to tell I put out my light and sat by the open window with my pipe—the most charming, the most unobtrusive, the most sympathetic companion that ever solaced a bachelor's loneliness.

I had much to think of. Nearly four months had passed since I arrived at Rich Pond. Every hour of the time had been a delight, and much had been spent in work—work that produced no results, to be sure, except to convince me that the illicit still I sought was in no cave, but located in one of the many tenant cabins on my grandfather's or on Mr. Linque's farm. Whatever my suspicions might become of any special place, I would find it impossible to institute a search in a dwelling, because I was acting incognito.

Debating whether I had best drop the hunt and go home, I had spent the preceding day in Jim's study, and failed to secure a full jug, so my time had been wasted. But my failure to get the whiskey assured me that the distiller

In Which I Join a Man Hunt

had scented danger from my persistent patronage, and if he thought me dangerous, I must make myself so. I had in wily fashion endeavored to persuade Mr. Lincque to reclaim the waste land that was covered by the thicket, but his reply was:

“You are right, Mr. Burton; that thicket just ruins some ten or twelve acres of good land; and I would like powerful well to cut it out, but Juletty is so detarmined to save them ‘Cyardinals,’ as she calls ’m, that I ain’t had had the heart to do it.”

I knew how she loved the Cardinals, and hundreds of them fed there all winter on the sumac berries, and nested in the spring. It was a sweet fancy of the girl’s, and I respected the rough old father for humoring it, though it interfered with my plans. Could I but clear out that undergrowth I felt sure of taking the distiller red-handed. Dreams of Juliet put all thought of business out of my head, and I sat gazing drowsily at a light which I knew gleamed from a neighbor’s window. The farm joining grandfather’s was owned and occupied by the Clarks, people of wealth, culture, and refinement, and most excellent neighbors; the large, old colonial house

Juletty

was lonely, for only the old gentleman and his wife lived there. She had that day dined with grandmother, saying it was to have company during her husband's absence of several days. I asked if she were afraid to stay there all alone, and she laughingly declared that an old lady like herself had nothing to fear. I remembered how her dainty little hands were adorned with diamonds, and thought how young she had seemed as she replied with like spirit to some of my grandfather's merry badinage. Unless it was telepathy, I cannot tell why I so persistently recalled the sparkle of her dark eyes and the ripple of her laughter as I sat there in my dark room, gazing at her light. Suddenly, before my eyes, leaving no room for doubt, the light was blotted out, and at the same instant there fell upon my ear the shrill, piercing shriek of a woman. It was faint, and had my thoughts been other than they were I should not have noticed it. I sprang to my feet and, slippered and hatless, dashed downstairs, shouted as I raced through the hall, "There's trouble at Clark's," and ran madly on.

I cleared the lawn fence at one bound, and running as I had not run since I left old Centre

In Which I Join a Man Hunt

College, headed across fields to the Clark place.

I felt as if it were a crawling pace, for those piercing, pitiful shrieks called me on.

I lifted my own voice in hoarse terror of the unknown thing, and cried, "I come, I come, I come!"

Each time my quickened breath admitted of utterance I repeated the cry, "I come, I come!"

Then the other wailing tones ceased.

What was it? Had murder been done?

God! if I could but fly!

Yet I know the race was quickly made, and it was only a few minutes that brought me to the wide-open door of the old home.

Moans from within thrilled me as I drew a match from my pocket and struck it. The flickering flame showed the woman whom I had seen a few hours before in health and happiness, prone on the floor. Her clothing was torn and displaced, her hair loose and dishevelled, her face blood-stained.

She gave no sign of consciousness, but moaned as if in horror. I hastily arranged her clothing, and taking a pillow from the bed,

Juletty

made her as comfortable as I could, and had secured water and towels to bathe her face when grandfather and half a dozen negro men arrived.

The old gentleman glanced keenly about, saw the disarranged furniture and evidences of a struggle, and his face went ashy gray. "Mitch," he said—and I think I never heard more of sternness and solemn pathos in any voice—"you see what's been done here. Go bring your mistress to this sufferer."

The negro slipped away in silence to obey him, and he turned to the others. "Charley, go over to Martin's and tell him and his boys of this, and say that I am waiting here for them. Caspar, you go to Rickett's and deliver the same message. John, go to Gartin's and do the same thing, and Jock, you go to my brother Charles. Don't wait to go home for horses. Get them from Clark's stable, and don't spare them."

Without one word the boys left us, and we shortly heard the rattle of hoofs as they went speedily on their errands.

Scarcely had they departed when my grandmother reached us. Kneeling beside the still

In Which I Join a Man Hunt

unconscious woman, she wrapped her arms about her and sobbed broken-heartedly :

“ Oh, Margaret, Margaret, my friend, that you should come to this, that you should come to this ! ”

Her voice and the dropping of her sympathetic tears accomplished what we had been unable to do—roused the sufferer, and she clung to her, whispering in broken gasps, “ Marion, Marion, Marion, is it you ? ”

The horror was heavy upon her, and she looked fearfully about, gazing deep into the shadows as if fearing some new terror might spring from their depths.

“ It is I indeed, my dear, and I will not leave you. Oh, if I had only made some one stay with you this night ! Come, Jack, lay her on that bed. ”

After she had been disrobed and made neat, though it was often necessary for us to pause and try to comfort and soothe her that we might keep off, if possible, those terrible paroxysms of suffering, my grandmother asked her very gently :

“ Can you tell us anything of what has happened, Margaret ? ”

Juletty

She had not once spoken since that first calling of her friend's name. She had made no outcry whatever, only those spasms of trembling showed her agony.

Even in response to the question she could only bury her face in her torn hands and shake her head, while a storm of passionate horror shook her slight figure like a reed tempest tossed.

Grandmother, however, would not be dismissed, hard as the questioning was. She knew what was meant by that call for his neighbors from the impetuous old man stamping back and forth on the porch. She felt that deeds like that must be done on certainty alone. But assurance once made sure, even that gentle soul would have them speedily about the business.

Again she urged: "Margaret, my love, tell your friend—has the greatest evil that can come to a woman befallen you this night?"

"Oh, Marion, it has, it has!" wailed the stricken woman, in such agonized tones that I groaned aloud.

Grandmother bent over her with renewed protestations of tenderness, while I left the

In Which I Join a Man Hunt

room, feeling I could no longer endure the sight of her misery.

Mitch sat on the stile, and as I went out I saw a line of silver falling from his hand. Passing over to him I found it to be the chains by which he held two magnificent blood-hounds. They were his own property, reared and trained by himself, and I knew he had brought them unbidden.

"Mitch," I said, to see just what his feeling was, "this is a dreadful affair."

"Dat's whut 'tis, Marse Jack. It's des erbout the wust ting ebber happen in our-all's county. But we's gwinter wipe it out. We's gwinter kill dat nigger ef hit takes us till nex' Christmas ter fin' him."

"But you do not know that it was a negro, Mitch," I said.

"Yes, I does, too, Marse Jack; hit's des lack er fool nigger. Dat's whut gives us all er bad name; us good niggers work, an' tug, and berhave ouse'ves and gits er putty good name, an' long come some black debbil uv er nigger an' do some'in awful, an' de whole nigger race gits blame for it. Us good uns ain' gwinter stan' hit no longer; we's gwin

Juletty

'long wid you-all to-night an' see dat nigger git his desarts fur onct. Dar ain' but one thing er comin' ter nigger or whitey whut's done er thing lack dis one nohow, an' dat's death."

In less than an hour messengers and neighbors had gathered at the desolated home; there must have been between twenty and thirty men standing about in the yard. Many came unsummoned, but the horror had been noised abroad mysteriously, as all horrors are. There were some negroes, but the decided majority were white, and I knew them as the most prominent representative citizens of that part of Warren County. I found no difficulty in recognizing them, as there was no masking or slightest effort at hiding identities. The most remarkable point in the gathering was the silence; it seemed to me that no single remark had been made till my grandfather stepped to the edge of the porch and addressed the crowd in a voice that was tremulous to brokenness with the intensity of his emotion. He said:

"Men, the foulest outrage that can disgrace humanity has been perpetrated here to-night. Our friend, our neighbor, faithful and kind, one



In Which I Join a Man Hunt

of the purest, noblest, loveliest women of the earth, has had her future life turned into one protracted horror, no matter how long that life may be, by some beast whose mere existence is a curse to the world. This might have been my wife, or might have been yours. No home is safe while such a fiend has breath. Shall we avenge our friend? Shall we secure safety for our wives and daughters? There is but one way. I do not know the color of this brute—I do not care to know; but be he black or white, so surely as there reigns a God in heaven, so surely as we love our wives and honor them for their purity—so surely shall he never look upon another sun.”

He ceased speaking.

There had been no interruption of either agreement or dissent. And when he closed there followed no sound save an unintelligible murmur, certainly no intemperance of speech or conduct. There was a stir; torches the negroes had brought were lighted, and I noticed my grandfather had a rope coiled loosely on his arm. The men quietly mounted their horses, and he called Mitch and spoke in an undertone to him.

Juletty

The negro patted his dogs and spoke soothingly to them, rubbing the distended nostrils of each with a coarse, soiled kerchief we had found on the floor near the unfortunate woman. At length, with an encouraging push he bade them "Hunt!"

They wagged their tails, sniffed the ground, and came back, hesitating and uncertain, to their master, fawning and jumping upon him as if not understanding what was wanted.

He patted the great, brown heads and pulled the long, glossy ears caressingly.

"Hunt! hunt!" he repeated in a low tone.

Again they placed nose to earth and turned their heads from side to side quickly as they loped lightly to the open house-door, and entered; smelt long and anxiously the carpet whence the kerchief had been taken, and then raised their heads and bayed joyously at trail of game, dashing wildly around the house and making for the woodland in the rear.

Every man followed but three reluctant ones, who were left with the women. Not once again did the intelligent dogs falter.

I feared that the brook we must cross would thwart them, but not so; they sprang over

In Which I Join a Man Hunt

unhesitatingly and kept on, now and again giving tongue, but not noisily, until we had gained the densest part of the forest.

There, with yelps ever quicker and shorter, they sped on to a fallen tree, where they barked furiously, scratching off the bark, and rushing round and round it.

Al Lincque stopped and looked sharply at the larger end of the log, and when he arose announced, "Ther log's holler; an' the devil's inside uv it. Thar ain't no axe ter chop it open with, so somebody gimme er match an' I'll burn 'im out."

"No," said grandfather, "we'll give him a chance first." And he called to the fugitive, but unavailingly.

The log was kicked, rolled over, and shaken, but no sign came from within.

"I'm afraid your dogs are a failure, Mitch," some one said impatiently.

"No, sir, dey ain' no failure; dey's right, shore's yer bawn." Then, leaning close to the log, he shouted in tones loud and clear, "Come outen dar, Bill Jackson!

"I know you's dar, kase dese hyar dawgs knows yer, and dey ain' tellin' no lie; an' I

Juletty

knows yer by dis hyar hankercher yer done stoled fum me las' county cote."

Mitch had not before told of his discovery concerning the handkerchief, and it was only dragged from him that time by his great anxiety for the reputation of his dogs.

There followed a muttered oath from the hollow log, and a large, muscular negro crept forth, stood erect, and shook from his clothing the tiny particles of decayed bark.

"Whutcher all come er wakin' me fer, dis hyar time er night? When I jes crope in dar fer er good all-night's sleep, whutcher all come er botherin' roun' fer? Whutcher doin' out hyar, ennyhow? Whut's de matter?"

The bluff was well played, and argued for the negro's sharpness, but it failed.

"This is a very solemn question, Mitch, and a fellow-man's life hangs on your answer," said Judge Martin. "Can you swear that this is Bill's handkerchief?"

"Yessir, I can swear it, Jedge; cose I can swear ter it; ain' I seed him wid hit no longer ago'n yistiddy? An den, he done stoled hit fum me bersides, jes lack I done tole yer."

In Which I Join a Man Hunt

But the criminal was as cool as any of the party (and there was no excitement from start to finish), so he made one more bold bluff for his life, and said, with something like a laugh or sneer: "Mitch's lyin'; 'tain' my hankcher 'tall, it's his'n."

The indignant Mitch lifted his big hand to strike, but grandfather stopped him. "Never mind, Mitch, I know where you were when that rag was lost; you were safe at home."

The negro's face brightened with a new idea caught from the words. "Yessir, Mr. Hamilton, yessir; I wuz home too; I ain' been ober ter Mr. Clark's fer six mon'hs. Swear ter God I ain', Mr. Hamilton."

That was enough; the Clark name had not been mentioned by the party, and he had convicted himself.

Grandfather advanced. I could see his face clearly in the light of the torches, and it had positively no anger in it. He felt himself simply an upright avenger, a representative of justice, and the hand that slipped the noose about the black neck was firm and even gentle in its movements.

"Gentlemen," he said, "this affair could not

Juletty

be allowed to drag through the courts, and the name of our friend be made a by-word throughout the land ; we will avenge her here and now, quietly, go quietly to our homes, and never speak of this. Bill, I am sorry for you.

“ God knows I wish this need not have been, but you have forced it on us.

“ You have only five minutes to live ; have you anything to say ? ”

“ Naw, sir,” was the sullen answer.

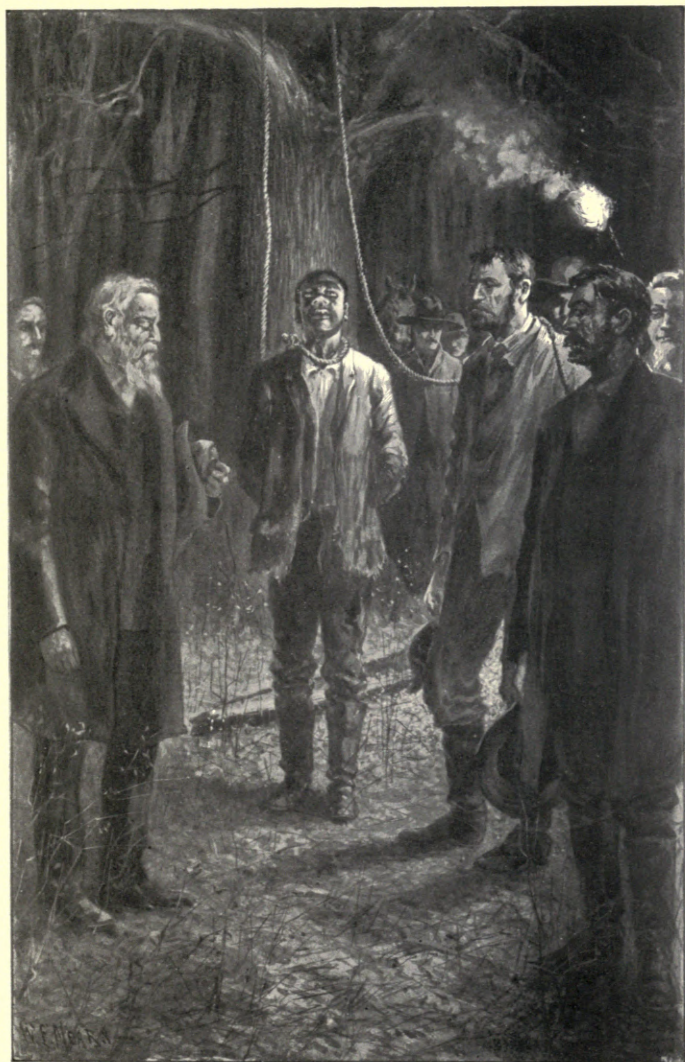
“ What devil possessed you, Bill ? Why, oh, why did you commit such a crime ? ”—a very passion of regret in the voice.

“ ‘Cause she had me tu’ned off, dam——”

Grandfather interposed : “ This is no time for curses, Bill ; pray.”

“ I ain’ got no pra’rs ter say.”

Grandfather lifted his big soft hat and stood bareheaded by the great, sullen brute, and at his first word each head was bared ; and in the flickering light of torches, mid the silence of the woodland, the men stood motionless and bowed as he said, “ O God ! Creator of all things, even the vilest worm that crawls, if in the fulness of Thy grace there can be pity for a wretch so low, have mercy on this soul.”



In Which I Join a Man Hunt

He gave the rope's end to Al Lincque, and turned away.

I did likewise.

When I looked again the twitching semblance of a man hung from the oak above us, and in the weird light a poor, distorted face grinned hideously at the group of silent, stern, pitiless avengers.

It was a grievous sin, and grievously had he answered for it. That was full twenty years ago; but from that time to this I have not heard one word of reference to that night's deeds from any member of the party.

However the world might judge, they had done what was to them a hard but plain duty.

To-day all but myself see it in the white light of Eternity.

CHAPTER VIII

In Which First Blood is Drawn

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH FIRST BLOOD IS DRAWN

A SETTLED gloom hung over the community. Almost it might have been as when the first-born of each household lay dead.

It was when the sorrow was lifting that grandmother came to me for a quiet word or two—dear, patient grandmother, who never chided, no matter what one's fault might be, whose voice I never heard lifted above the very gentlest tones, and whose strength of character and beauty remain with me to this day—though my own hair is whitening—and who still continues my ideal of womanliness.

That morning when she approached me I knew she had come to rebuke me in her most unrebukeful way.

"Jack dear," she said, smoothing the hair from my brow, "I do not half like your spending so much of your time at Mr. Lincque's."

"But mither mine, Juliet seems to have no

Juletty

objection, and I am charmed to do so. My one grief in the matter is that I am compelled to be so much away from the dearest woman in the world—except one.” I kissed her hand and she shook her head smilingly as I added, “How happy could I be with either were t’other dear charmer away!”

She blushed as a girl, but bridled as a woman. “I would fancy Juliet does not object. I have no doubt of her pleasure in your visits; but, my boy, she does not belong to our kind of people.”

What a peculiar tone she took on for that speech, born aristocrat that she was!

One would single her out from a thousand as blue blooded just as readily as a practical horseman would pick a thoroughbred. Pardon the twig for boasting of the parent stem; it is a Kentucky characteristic, and was produced by adequate causes. She was not through; she was bent on arguing the case, but the argument would be short lived, and end with a kiss and a Godspeed in my wooing.

“Juliet’s father has money, ’tis true,” she continued, still stroking my hair, “but though money is a good thing it is not all; it cannot

In Which First Blood is Drawn

take the place of blood. If Juliet were not the bright, sparkling beauty that she is, you know, dear, she would not be received anywhere."

Grandmother waited for me to speak, but after the manner of men of my family I had nothing to say when deeply moved.

"Her father has given her excellent advantages," she then went on to say; "he is a sensible man. But, my dear child, it is certainly best for all concerned that she should keep to her own place in life, and the most satisfactory arrangement possible, as I see it, is that she should marry that giant cousin who risked his life for her, and settle down to farming and poultry raising—the happiest life for any woman, anyway."

Another wait; still silence on my part.

"Do you not agree with me, my son?"

"Juliet is my promised wife," I said conclusively.

That was enough; the gentlewoman honored the confession, and would not have me otherwise than true; never again did she insinuate to me that my marriage would be other than pleasant to her. Indeed, through much after

Juletty

misery she was my comforter. Before leaving me she kissed me fondly and said, "I have not forgotten my youth, my son; your grandmother's heart is with you, and desires only your happiness."

But I heard a sigh as I passed from the room, and felt her eyes follow me as I walked away down the maple-bordered avenue.

The sun had risen during our talk, and I saw all the earth covered by a fog, gray, soft, dense, as if woven of silvery cobwebs; wherever I might stand the ragged edges next me had a yellow glint where the sun had shot it with his golden beams in hope to rend it all asunder.

A Kentucky fog is different from others.

It has not that dampness that makes one shiver and yawn and grow cross and croaky.

If such a thing were possible I would call it a dry fog.

On second thought I shall call it that any way.

It buoys your spirit up; keeps you active and stirring; doing, doing, doing, anything to be outside and in it.

Soon after leaving the door I heard grand-

In Which First Blood is Drawn

father's stentorian tones, and following their sound found myself in front of the negro quarters, many of the cabins being still inhabited by their former occupants and still controlled by the master, who sat with a bucket and tin dipper beside him and a bottle in his hand. Some twenty young negroes, from the tiny toddler of two years to the half-grown youth, were ranged in line before him; one by one they advanced and were made to swallow, with many grimaces, a spoonful of the contents of the bottle, and wash it down, with numerous chop lickings, by a drink from the ladle. I waited till they closed the *séance* and scampered away before asking what it meant.

"Well," said he as he arose and took up his bucket, "I think an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure; so once a week I dose the young 'uns with copperas and a drink of whiskey to keep 'em in condition. I always done it when I owned 'em, and I'll keep it up 'slong as they live on my place. I'm not going to have 'em startin' a plague right on my premises."

He left his bucket at the porch, and we walked across the lawn. The fog had lifted

Juletty

somewhat, and we could see drawn up beside the stile a vehicle of some sort which had not been there the previous night. Grandfather saw it first with his keen eyes. "A photograph gallery on wheels!" he exclaimed.

"Well, they can just move on; there's nobody here so good-looking that we can afford to risk er camery on 'em. Thar's more fools er paradin' the country with such rigs as that than you can shake a stick at. I make a point never to encourage ^{em} them with my patronage. Le's go ask 'em in to breakfas'; I bet they got none uv their own," he added, inconsistently though hospitably.

"I bet thar's er woman an' dozen young uns in the old bunk."

I lagged behind him, but on his arrival at the car hastened my pace, for he exploded into such a volley of oaths and vituperation as I had seldom heard.

One glance into the interior revealed the cause of his unholy indignation. There sat my uncle Warner, newspaper in hand, gazing in mild astonishment and some shamefacedness at his angry father; behind him his wife bent over a small stove, preparing breakfast;

In Which First Blood is Drawn

about him were his three children in various stages of undress. He finally managed to expostulate :

“ O father ! father ! don't swear so.”

“ Swear the devil ! ” ejaculated his sire.

“ Be thankful I don't murder you.”

“ I know what you've done ; don't tell me ; Ellen's red eyes are enough. There's only one thing I want to know, and that is, what is the quickest and easiest way to get you out of it ? ”

My uncle's soft eyes brightened ; he saw his time of explanation had come, and felt sure that once in his life he had made a good trade and acted shrewdly in business, so he actually smiled as he drew up an extra chair for his father (though it was declined), and began :

“ You see, I went to town last county court day and sold my mules for the best prices I ever got. Well, as I was coming home I met a man with this car, and he stopped for a talk. He was interested in horses and mules, and enquired what I got for mine, and so on. At last he said—and it was a very sensible thing, too—‘ Now, you got one thousand dollars for your mules, but how long did it take you to

Juletty

do it? You keep some of them six months, and some two years, and if you count time, money, and expense you have come out in debt. Now look at me; I just sit here easy and comfortable; when I get tired of one place, hook up and go to another; I see the world, and know what's going on. Don't do a thing till some one comes along and wants a tin-type, then I take it in two minutes, finish it in five, and charge fifty cents for the seven minutes' work. Making money hand over fist, and enjoying life at the same time.' That is what he said, and then he had an awful spell of coughing.

"He said he had consumption, he had inherited it from his mother, and would have to quit business and retire, because he had not long to live.

"I felt sorry for him, and asked what he'd take for the outfit as it stood; when he told me I snapped him up and took it."

"What'd yer give fer ther dam thing?" interrupted his father.

Uncle Warner shifted uneasily in his chair and regarded his sire anxiously; he had evidently not made the impression he had ex-

In Which First Blood is Drawn

pected to make as to his worldly wisdom, but answered: "Three hundred dollars cash, and the bay filly to boot; you see I sorter threw in the filly, as he was sick and had to have some way to get to town."

"I see; an' it's er dam pity you hadn't throwed yourself in, too; but I s'pose he wouldn't er had yer."

"Take the children to the house, daughter," he said kindly to Aunt Ellen; "I'll settle with this fool."

"Don't be too hard on him, father," she whispered as she left us.

"Now, Buddy, le's get you reconstructed; I knowed you was up to some fool thing when you stayed away three or four days at a time, and I ought to have gone to see about you. But I am truly thankful you didn't trade your whole farm fer the dam thing."

"Oh, my dear sir, you are so impetuous," reproached the offender, gently; "why, look here, can't you see it is a good thing? Now, I can make one picture in seven minutes (but will say ten for the sake of your impatience), and for that ten minutes' work I get fifty cents. Ten minutes to one picture makes six pictures

Juletty

to the hour, which will amount to three dollars. I can work eight hours a day ; and there you are, twenty-four dollars—twenty-four dollars per day, besides having all the time one would want for mental improvement and family pleasure,” the little man concluded, in a glow of triumph and conviction.

“Oh, hell!” groaned the irate old gentleman ; “you are the damdest fool livin’. You’ve had the cussed thing three weeks now, and how many pictures have you made ?”

“One,” and Buddy hung his head.

“And at one picture ever’ three weeks how long will it take for you and your children ter starve to death? That’s ther kind uv arithmetic I want you to be studyin’. You go ter the house—if you got sense enough ter find ther way—and then, after breakfast, go home and stay thar. I reckon I know what to do with this cussed thing. Tom! Dick! Harry!” he yelled to the negroes at the woodpile, and they came running with their axes in their hands. “Chop this dammed cyart ter kindlin’ wood, and I’ll pay you with them three ratty little mules that hauled it here.” The chopping was done, and thus ended Buddy’s only attempt to



In Which First Blood is Drawn

go into business without first consulting his father.

That day, however, was destined to be one of unusual stir in family affairs. After an early supper I sat with my hosts before the wide sitting-room fireplace, when a rap was heard at the open door—how I enjoyed that combination of open doors and huge fires in early spring! In response to an invitation to enter, my grandfather's only brother, Charles Hamilton, came in. He was a fine old man; it warms my heart to think of him now—tall, erect, white-haired, and stately, with the manner and bearing of a prince. I hastened to relieve him of coat and of cane, and seat him at the fire where the light would not dazzle his glasses; he thanked me, with a smile and a wave of his hand.

A little talk—a compliment to my grandmother on the fact that at each of his visits she seemed to have grown younger, a reproach to me for being chary of my visits to him—and he turned to his brother.

“Alec!” (and I wish I could put into the printed word the tenderness of his utterance, for there was something even pathetic in his

Juletty

tone as he spoke the name)—“Alec, my brother, we are growing old——”

“Well, dammit, who disputes it?” blurted his brother.

Outwardly the two were as opposite as the poles; inwardly they were in perfect accord. To the startling interruption the other replied, “Oh, no one; no one at all. We have had many business transactions together, and we have had no balancing of accounts, no settlement of any sort for fifty years, though in that time we have done business amounting to thousands of dollars.” I arose immediately to leave the room, having no mind to be a witness in a settlement of that sort with my choleric old ancestor for a party to it, but he stopped me: “No, sir, just stay right where you are; you are exactly like your father, ready to sneak out of every tight place when you can.” I sat down with a laugh, and he turned to Uncle Charles.

“What the devil do you want with a settlement, Charles? I’m satisfied, ain’t you? If you ain’t, say what’s comin’ ter you, and I’ll pay it.”

“No, no, Alec; not that way; not so fast.

In Which First Blood is Drawn

Indeed, I think I owe you ; but let everything be done decently and in order."

" Well, if nothin' else will do you, come on ; I've got as good er memory as you have."

Then followed what was without doubt the strangest business transaction I ever witnessed. Neither party had the scratch of a pen for reference, but both delved into their memories of the past for such items as :

" My Tom stayed a month helping you in tobacco, and your Sally cooked for us one month when Maria's baby was born."

" That three thousand dollars I borrowed of you was paid by nigger Tom and a pair of carriage horses," and so forth.

They agreed, till Uncle Charles said :

" Alec gave him all the wood he wanted out of the oak grove."

" No," interrupted grandfather, " I didn't say it."

" Well, what did you say ?"

" I said all you *needed*, and thar's er darned sight er difference. Not that you cut a single stick you wasn't welcome to, but I like to be quoted right."

After discussing and settling a hundred

Juletty

points the pair came to the conclusion that my Uncle Charles owed his brother three hundred dollars.

He at once dipped his hand in his coat-tail pocket and drew forth an old, well-worn, slick pocketbook, opened it and began counting out bills, smoothing each over his knee in turn. Grandfather, looking on, cleared his throat, fidgeted, and finally, after much hesitation, remarked :

“Never mind now, Charles ; any time will do for that.”

“The present is the best of times, for it is all we really possess,” said the other, gravely continuing his count.

Grandfather rose, hobbled up and down the room on his rheumatic legs for several turns, and then repeated vociferously :

“Never mind, Charles, I tell you.”

“I always pay my debts, Alec ”—still counting.

“To hell with your debts ! You don’t owe me a darned cent, sir.” Uncle Charles then looked over his spectacles to see the big tears rolling over his brother’s ruddy cheeks, to see that the bighearted man would rather die than

In Which First Blood is Drawn

touch that money, though it was the expressive face, not the tongue, that said—"What, money a question between us two? What are a few paltry dollars to brothers? All that I have is yours if you should need it; let nothing so sordid as the payment of bills pass between us."

The face really told all that, but the wayward tongue only said, as he made an effort to appear rough and drowsy :

"Dammit, Charles, you goin' ter set here talkin' about nothin' all night? Put up your money and go home, or stay here and go to bed; I'm sleepy."

With a tightening at our windpipes we laughed at his transparent desire to hide his warm, generous soul, and he joined us in it.

I ran upstairs for a heavy coat to walk to the avenue gate with the guest, and as I passed the open door of Buddy's room (his mother had coaxed him to stay for a rest) I heard him tell his wife :

"You will see I am not such a fool some day, Ellen. Strawberries are the thing, since nothing will do you and father but that I stay on the farm. Only think, strawberries sold

Juletty

last year the season through at fifty cents per quart. Now I have raised one hundred and twenty-five quarts on one-eighth of an acre, by actual measurement—that would be twelve hundred quarts to the acre; twelve hundred quarts at fifty cents per quart would be six hundred dollars. At six hundred dollars for one acre, my whole farm of five hundred acres would bring thirty thousand dollars; keep it up ten years and I'd be worth three hundred thousand dollars! Then I would retire and fiddle away the rest of my days; and we could be happy, couldn't we, dear?"

I slipped guiltily away and proceeded to the "pike gate" with uncle; then, having said good-night, I started back alone. I paced slowly along, with my hands in my pockets and my eyes on the north star, wondering if Juliet were looking at it and thinking of me. About half-way home I stumbled—after the manner of star gazers—and fell prone.

At the moment of my fall I heard the sharp report of a pistol near, and felt a sting as of a red-hot needle passing across the back of my head. I failed at first to connect sensation and sound, but as I lay to gather together my

In Which First Blood is Drawn

scattered senses, I heard rapid retreating footsteps that startled me into thought. I sat up, put my hand to my head, and shuddered to draw it away dripping with blood. I saw plainly that my stumble had saved my life, though I could not think who could have cared to assassinate me, till I remembered the cave experience, and realized it must have been Al Lincque.

Would disappointed love occasion all that enmity?

As I walked to the house I for the first time had a thought, which might have occurred to me before but that I was too deeply interested in the Lincque family: perhaps I had shown too much curiosity about that illicit still.

Was that where the shoe pinched Al Lincque?

CHAPTER IX

In Which "Buddy" Proves Game



CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH "BUDDY" PROVES GAME

ONE of the most noteworthy physical peculiarities of Warren County—except that it produces pennyrile rather than blue grass—is the sudden rise of water which makes what is called "Rich Pond" and gives the name to the railway station below Bowling Green.

Usually it is no pond at all, the land being under cultivation when it is not under water.

In one of my grandfather's fields about one mile from the station there is an immense crevasse known to the farmers thereabouts as "The Big Sink Hole," and in a very rainy season this sink hole throws from its capacious maw a volume of water that is beyond estimation.

Silent and irresistible as the rider of the pale horse, it spreads its limpid way spite of all obstacles, all diking, all cementing that years of thought and labor have contrived, until the

Juletty

public highway is submerged and travel rendered dangerous. Even as the far-famed Nile buries its glorious valley, so does this subterranean stream at times break forth to bury hundreds of fertile acres.

Fences are destroyed, barns swept away, and stock killed. The receding water leaves an alluvial deposit so rich as to produce the most magnificent corn and wheat crops in Kentucky, yet the damage done is greater than the compensation received, and any civil engineer who could prevent the flood or divert it into a harmless channel would be well rewarded.

The source of the stream is an unsolved problem. Buddy, whose dreamy, poetic fancies asserted themselves early in life, was at the tender age of six well-nigh converted to angelhood while bathing in its waters. To Buddy the water seemed warm in March weather, and when the fluid had been sufficiently drained from his lungs to admit of speech, he spluttered, "Muvver, it comes from China, 'cause it tastes like tea."

No scientist has advanced so satisfactory a source, and "the water from China" it is to this day.

In Which "Buddy" Proves Game

Doubtless some subterranean river in that land of many caverns bursts its earthy fetters, and in a mad longing after freedom pours forth from its dreary prison.

The scratch on my head from the pistol ball proved rather more serious than I had at first thought; I felt feverish and dizzy for several days and was glad to keep indoors.

Being covered by my hair, it could not betray me, and I kept my own counsel concerning it, giving as explanation of my indisposition the common excuse, "a cold."

I felt restless, and more impatient to continue my hunt for that still than ever. Al's footsteps after the firing of the shot that wounded me had convinced me that he was the man I was after and intended to capture.

During my confinement I heard numerous references to "ther Grove er raisin'," and had heard grandfather say to the negroes when he gave the night orders, "Don't fail ter move Henry's gray mare ter-morrow mawnin'; ther water'll be clar over that barn in another twenty-four hours, and he'd die if anything happens ter her."

Henry was the eldest son, and the mare in

Juletty

question was his special pet ; her speed and sagacity had more than once saved his life while on a speculating tour in Kansas during the days of Indian raids. •

But scarcely had the next day dawned when I heard an excited negro call: "Marse Alec! Marse Alec! Git up quick, ther Grove's done riz clare over de wes' fiel' terbacker barn, an' Marse Henry's filly's done gone up fer shore."

I sprang hastily from my bed, and in a few moments joined my grandfather hurrying to the border of the placid water, whose surface gave no hint of the treacherous, powerful undercurrent. But for the elevated situation of the house there would have been reason to fear for the safety of the family ; as it was, the water lapped the base of the lawn fence and stretched away as far as we might look—north, south, and west.

I could scarcely credit my senses ; where, three days before, last year's cornstalks and tobacco leaves had lain thick upon the ground, was a huge lake.

A group of excited, gesticulating negroes had preceded us and were making dire prophecies as to what "Marse Henry" would say and

In Which "Buddy" Proves Game

do when he should hear of his mare's death, which it was evident could not be prevented.

The tobacco barn like the dwelling, was built on a knoll; both had stood clear of the water long after the valley between was submerged. On our arrival at the lake we discovered that only the lower part of the barn had been flooded, but the tide was rapidly swelling. The building was unoccupied save by the little mare, and we could see her quite plainly, for the force of the water had washed the door of her stall from its hinges.

"Ef she hadn't al'ays been ther bigges' rogue on the farm she might er saved herse'f," said one of the negroes; "we al'ays haster fas'en her up like er runaway nigger. Dat ar halter ain' er gwineter break, nother; no, sir, she's dar ter stay," and he rolled his black eyes and shook his woolly head and wondered "what in de worl' Marse Henry would say." When the animal saw us she pricked up her delicate ears and whinnied in short, soft notes that said plainly as human voice might have called: "Help! Help! Help!"

"Boys," said grandfather, turning to the negroes who had come, "the man who saves

Juletty

that mare can pick the best pair of mules on my farm for his own."

They exchanged glances with each other, but made no move.

"I'll add a good milk cow."

No response.

"I'll throw in five acres of tobacco land and a cabin."

That meant wealth to any negro, and one of them, stung to exasperation by the riches so near and yet so far, cried out: "Yessah; but dat water's deep, lemme tell you, mon.

"An' den eben sposin' yer could swim, dat filly's skeered; an' tain' no fun er leadin' er skeered hoss in er swif' cyurren'. Den 'sides, hit's leas' er quarter uv er mile dar an' back; ain' nobody whut keers fer deyselves gwineter go into dat ar rat trap. Umph, oo!"

"Get a skiff," I suggested.

"Ain' no skift nearer'n de craik, an' dat filly done be drowned and furgot she had ter drowned 'fore yer'd git dar an' back ter save yer life."

Grandfather looked at the poor mare striving to free herself from the confining halter, and cried angrily:

In Which "Buddy" Proves Game

"You cowardly curs! You wouldn't risk your black necks for your soul's salvation." Then he added devoutly, "Dam this rheumatism! I've er great notion ter try it anyway."

I knew a part of his contempt was for me, but my head was still too painful for me to run any risk—though he did not know that—and the case seemed hopeless. While we stood on the bank the water had risen to her halter strap, and she could only keep her head clear of it by the tightness of the tether. That she managed to keep upright at all must have been due to a swimming motion of her feet.

In the midst of our despair for her a cheery voice back of us shouted: "Hello! What's up, what's up?"

"The Grove," answered grandfather laconically.

Buddy laughed good-naturedly, for it was he, late as usual, and with his rifle across his shoulder.

One glance made him master of the entire situation, and he turned with flashing eyes to the cowering darkies, and cried: "Are you going to stand there and see the best mare

Juletty

that ever breathed drown? Off with your clothes, you black rascals, and bring her out."

Ah! Buddy, you reckoned without your host; you forgot that you no longer spoke to slaves, but free men; not one of them budged, and their faces grew sullen under his angry glances. Then Buddy swore.

Terrible was the occasion on which Buddy uttered an oath. "Dag-gone, tarnation, and death!" he shouted.

That was his best swearing, spite of his father's fine example. "Dag-gone, tarnation, and death! Then I'll do it myself." Another moment and he had slipped from his clothes, and, white and shapely as a marble Apollo, dashed to the water's edge. There he paused with the flash of a new thought in his face; he turned, caught his shining rifle, and lifted the barrel to his face, pressing the stock to his gleaming shoulder.

"Don't, Marse Buddy, don't kill 'er," moaned a negro.

But the rifle cracked, and was dropped.

Then a clear, sweet whistle from Buddy's lips was answered by a low whinnie.

In Which "Buddy" Proves Game

His rifle ball had cut the mare's strap and she was free to come to him.

She thrust her head from the doorway, but drew back.

Again the sweet-toned whistle, and then Buddy's high, clear voice rang out like some silver trumpet encouraging to battle.

"Co' up! Co' up, Lady!"

Once more the mare essayed obedience, but the strain had broken her nerve and she dared not leave the stall.

Buddy saw that, and though the day was raw, he walked into the water; a trifle slowly he moved, to accustom himself to the chill till waist deep, then he struck out boldly.

He swam with magnificent, swift strokes, his blond head backward strained, his fair face with the great blue eyes lifted from the water.

A huge log was drifting down and he slacked for it to pass, and then we realized his danger. He called, with his light, cheery tones: "Father, if I shouldn't get back, be good to Ellen and the babies."

"Come back, my son, oh, come back!" implored his father.

There was no reply to this, and the dancing

Juletty

curls were blurred as the breeze lifted them from the water. Grandfather was colorless, and his clenched hands worked in convulsive unison with the motions of the swimmer. A long sigh from the watchers announced my uncle's arrival at the barn, but no one spoke.

We could see him reassure the mare with caresses; then we caught a glimpse of his white body partially slipped from the water as he mounted her, and saw him urge her, but she shrank in fear. Then the man's head bent close to the mare's dainty ears, and we knew he was speaking her courage. She approached the door, hesitated, looked back, and there—at last he had her out.

One plunge and they were on the homeward trip.

How weary he must be!

Could he hold out? It was a long swim.

They were doing bravely; half-way over.

Nearly safe!

Ah!!! God be merciful! so near, and then—even as we gazed unwinkingly at them they disappeared, and the treacherous surface smiled up at the blue sky as if innocent of blood-guiltiness.

In Which "Buddy" Proves Game

A loud cry from the eager father, and, nearer than when sinking, the two brave heads appeared, so near that the negroes waded out and dragged them ashore. Grandfather caught the slight figure in his arms, wrapped it in his great coat, and ordered: "Carry him to his mother."

As he and I walked behind our hero I could but say: "Ah, but it was a reckless risk of life, just for a horse!"

Then did the speaking eyes flash, and the indignant tone ring: "And tell me, in God's name, why would a Kentuckian risk his life, if not for a horse—or—or—a woman?"

CHAPTER X

In Which Hunter and Game are Snared

CHAPTER X

IN WHICH HUNTER AND GAME ARE SNARED

BUDDY appeared at dinner as though his morning swim were a part of his every-day programme, gay and debonair as ever. I saw but one difference: his mother's pride in him shone more brightly from her eyes, and his brandied peaches were served in a cut-glass dish which was usually reserved for state occasions.

After dinner I announced that I was going to Mr. Lincque's. "Are you well enough to venture?" asked grandmother. "If you will persist in going, do wrap up that throat warmly. I am opposed to you riding back in the night air, too; don't risk it, son; stay there over night."

I gave her a grateful word, not only for the extra time she allowed me with Juliet, but for the opportunity it would give me for prosecuting the still-hunt. Mitch had washed his hands

Juletty

of the affair after the cave experience, evidently considering me a most dangerous comrade, and so I would be alone, and was much mistaken if I did not unearth something of importance by morning.

Declining a proffered horse, I swung along across fields, having in my hand the yellow jug, which was the only weapon of war I carried on these expeditions.

I had no intention of visiting Juliet until I had made some move towards a capture, with which end in view I placed jug and coin on the stump, and seated myself behind it, where I was completely hidden from the sight of any one who might approach through the thicket. Knowing it was from thence the distiller would come, I strained my hearing to catch the first indication of his nearness, half wishing I had broken my rule and brought my pistol in case of an encounter.

I had sat there an hour when the clear note of a mocking-bird fell upon my ear; it was Jim's peculiar whistle, and I looked around in some irritation that he was forever intruding on my watches.

There he came, down the path, swinging in

In Which Hunter and Game are Snared

his left hand the duplicate of my yellow jug; his face brightened when he saw me, and he shouted merrily:

“Hello!”

I replied as heartily as I could, which is not much to say, especially as I saw that he was followed by Al Lincque's slouching figure. I, however, offered them seats beside me. They accepted, and Jim placed his jug by mine. I jokingly reminded him that he had forgotten the requisite coin.

“Oh, I don't want no whiskey nor brandy neither; that's my water jug,” he said.

After a few minutes' talk Jim started up with the exclamation, “I gotter git my lessons; won't cher come, Mr. Burton?”

“Not this time, thank you, Jim.”

“Well, ef yer won't yer won't. Good-by till supper time.”

Taking his jug, he started to leave us.

“Be sure that you have your own property,” I cautioned him.

“Aw, I'm certain erbout that. Mine didn't have no money under it.”

Knowing that, I only glanced at the stump, and returned Al's inquiry as to whether I

Juletty

would go to the house with a "No" very positively spoken. Then he said:

"I'm er goin' ter the craik, Mr. Burton. Won't cher come erlong? She's on the tarnellest boom yer ever seen; er washin' logs and drif' down fit ter kill, and wide 's ther Mississip. I ben er livin' on this hyar craik all my life, an' I hain' never seen nothin' ter ekal this hyar flood yit. One thing I can pintedly tell yer, and that is, no Buddy' couldn't swim her after no hoss nor no 'oman neither. Onct in, thar hain' no livin' man could come outen her."

The impressive tone of the last sentence I thought wholly unnecessary. It antagonized me. I knew of no man likely to swim the creek, and answered him rather brusquely:

"Not this evening, thank you. I shall sit here till late and then spend the night at Mr. Lincque's."

I fancied a gleam darted from his dull eyes.

"They hain' er spectin' yer home, then?"

"No, not till this jug is filled," I said meaningly.

He laid his hand on the article in question

In Which Hunter and Game are Snared

and tilted it to one side, remarking, as if he were surprised:

"Why, hit's full now; full er sumpin'. Yer must er been mistook an' got holt uv ther wrong jug."

"I have made no mistake," I said half angrily, at the same time lifting the jug. He had spoken truly; it was full.

"Jim made this mistake, not I. He has taken the wrong jug."

"Then, whar's yer money?" asked Al.

"Gone," and for the fourth time Jim had interrupted my watch so that it had resulted in failure.

"Well, yer can bet cher bottom dollar little Jimmie never took that," he said threateningly.

"Certainly not." I was completely mystified.

"Jimmie's jug had water in it. Taste an' see 'f this un has."

I pulled out the cork and tasted the contents—brandy, and of excellent quality, too; peach brandy at that. I suppose I showed I felt chagrined, for Al said consolingly:

"Aw, never min'. I wouldn't let er little thing like that bother me ter death. Say, Mr.

Juletty

Burton, whut cher wanter be er stirrin' eroun' hyar fer, meddlin' in other folks' business enny-how? I tell yer whut, 'f I's you I'd give up ther whole blame thing. Whut right 's Uncle Sam got ter be er sayin' whut we all gotter do with our-all's apples and peaches? Ain' er man got es good er right ter make brandy outen 'em as ter make preserves? Times is got so all-fired hard er feller's gotter do somepin outen ther ordinary, for he cain't live on jes plain crops no more.

"Then, bersides, he cain't make perserves outen all his things—he cain't afford ther sugar. Don't nothin' pay in Kentucky sence ever' durned nigger's got er crap uv somethin' er nother. Er white man's fambly 's gotter live, an' er heap uv 'em cain't make both ends meet no way 'cep'in' makin' er leetle brandy."

The unwonted length and earnestness of Al's speech surprised me. I knew, too, by its tenor that Jim had betrayed the fact of my being a United States marshal.

"The majesty of the law must be upheld," I quoted stupidly.

"Majesty uv hell!" exploded Al.

To the illicit distiller of Kentucky, law is

In Which Hunter and Game are Snared

simply an autocratic usurpation of power by a wayward but powerful set of men. His idea is that every man should be a law unto himself, controlling, defending, and caring for his own, and devil take the weakest. He considers it meritorious when he evades or thwarts such tyranny.

"Come on," continued Al coaxingly, "yer work's done hyar; ain' nothin' more gwineter happen. Le's walk onter ther craik; 'taint no morn'n three or four hunderd yards, an' I wanter talk ter yer. Ef yer git hongry I'll give yer some supper; my cabin's down thar; I'm er bachin' it."

The tempting bait of supper in Al's bachelor quarters was too much for me, and I yielded. As we walked Al held forth on the hard lot of a distiller—that is, a moonshiner—and revealed that he considered him a martyr to a tyrannical Government.

"Yer see," he said argumentatively, "whut er moonshiner makes is jes' pyure whiskey or brandy. Now them darned big-bugs, whut pays more money in license than us pore folks ever sees, doctors ther stuff till it's nothin' but cole pizen. Thet's whut 'tis, rank pizen; an'

Juletty

thet's ther reason we haster have temp'rance societies an' things. Moonshine whiskey don't never make nobody raise ther devil."

I forbore to remind him of Warren County's moonshine history, but let him have his say, and it was only interrupted by our arrival at the creek.

I found it as he had described: the insignificant little stream had become a wide river, on whose rapid current great heaps of drift were whirling past. Even as we stood gazing at the spectacle a dead cow was washed by, the heavy animal being tossed over and over, now this side, now that, as a straw is tossed in an eddy.

I shuddered, and turned from the sickening sight; as I did so my eyes encountered those of Al, for his were fixed on me, and not on the whirling water.

"Mr. Burton, won'cher go home, and gin this hyar hunt up?" he asked, almost entreatingly, though there was a threat there, too.

"I must do my duty, Al," I said, regretfully, accepting his knowledge of my employment tacitly. "I never shirk a duty because of what it may cost me."

In Which Hunter and Game are Snared

"No; but this hyar business might hurt er heap uv people 'sides yerself. Yer don't want er hurt nobody else, do yer?"

"Never. But my duty comes first, whatever the results."

"It'd put 'er near kill Juletty," he said, with the first tenderness I had ever heard in his voice.

I made no reply to the last plea, and fancying I was touched, he continued confidentially:

"I know who's er runnin' that still, an' 'twould jes' break 'er all up fer him ter be foun' out."

"You are mistaken if you think your exposure in crime would affect Miss Lincque," I said indignantly.

"Not jes es fur es it would hurt me"—this was humble enough; "yer needn't be afeered uv me er thinkin' too much uv myse'f in that d'rection. God knows I love 'er," and the untutored, illiterate fellow—elevated to the gallantry of knighthood by the power of love—lifted his hat and stood bareheaded at mention of his lady's name; "but I love 'er too much ter want 'er tied ter sech er thing es me. You air er fitter mate fer sech es 'er than me, an'

Juletty

yer air welcome ter make 'er yer wife. But es yer deal by 'er all ther days uv yer life, so may God A'mighty deal by you and yourn."

I was silent and abashed, knowing I could not love that way.

Then Al's mood changed and he recurred to the moonshine topic.

"Yer gwineter go home, an' let this thing erlone?"

"No."

"Whut sorter man air yer? Won' cher do er leetle thing lack that fer ther women yer pertend yer love? She don't keer nothin' erbout me, but thar's them mixed up in it whut 'twould break 'er heart ter have found out. Cain't yer understan' nothin'?"

"Oh, I'm willing to take that risk," I said jauntily.

"Fer Juletty's sake say yer'll play quits, Mr. Burton," he persisted imploringly.

I shook my head and turned from him.

He sprang after me, his giant figure alert and wiry, his steel gray eyes flashing with a strange, animal-like fire.

"Then, by God, I'll make yer!" he cried hoarsely.

In Which Hunter and Game are Snared

I avoided him and thrust my hand instinctively into my hip pocket; of course it was empty, and I thought what a fool I was to have had it so.

Al laughed; he knew I was completely in his power.

He caught my arm in a grip that hurt, and turned me about as a strong man plays with a little child; then lifted me in his arms, held me above him, and strode to the water.

I looked at the muddy, dashing waves and listened to the sullen boom; he did not pause till he was on the very brink.

"Swear yer won't make ernother move twodes findin' that ar still!"

I was silent.

"Thar'll never be er piece uv yer foun'," he warned.

"No, but you will hang for it," I told him coolly.

"Yer raikon I'd keer? But I wouldn't hang; 'tain't no oncommon thing for er man ter drownd when ther craik's on er tare."

He made a backward motion of his powerful arms as if to toss me from him. It was a sickening sensation, and I closed my eyes,

Juletty

thinking, strangely enough, "The world is very beautiful, even through cloud and wrack."

He did not throw, but drew me back, poisoning me above him, and said :

"I hate ter kill yer ; yer'd better prommuss."

There was regret and entreaty in his voice ; still I said : " No."

I now think there was less heroism in my decision than brute stubbornness, which does sometimes resist to the death.

Al sighed, lowered his arms, and placed me once more on earth.

"Yer air er plucky leetle devil," he said ; "come on, le's go ter my cabin an' arger it out. Nobody 'll be oneasy about yer ; ther Hamiltons 'll think yer air at ther Lincques's, an' ther Lincques's 'll think yer air at ther Hamiltons'."

"No ; there will be no search party to disturb your deviltry," I told him sarcastically.

The cabin was a one-roomed log affair, with an immense chimney of flat rock mortised with clay. This chimney afforded the neighbors a standing joke, because summer and winter, day and night, smoke issued from its capacious mouth.

In Which Hunter and Game are Snared

Al explained this fact by saying, "Yer see, I keep up ther fire all ther time, an' then I don't have ter split no kin'lin'. I never would er thought uv it myse'f, but Uncle Jim Lincque has kep' his'n up fer years on 'count er rheumatis, an' while I wuz er stayin' ther I seen whut er good thing it wuz erbout savin' kin'lin', an' so I jes keeps mine up same way."

I remembered the characteristic speech, and noted that there rose from the wide space a column of smoke against the gray sky. I was glad to see it, for it gave promise of warmth, and I was chilled through by the raw atmosphere.

"Al," I said, "why did you bring me down here to kill me? Why did you not make sure of me when you shot me in the avenue, at Skileland, last week?"

"I thought I had, when I seen yer fall; I don't gener'ly miss my mark, an' I don't know whut wuz ther matter 'ith me."

He displayed no other feeling than being puzzled at his failure. I would not gratify him by saying it was my stumble, not his poor marksmanship, and we kept on in silence.

When we reached the cabin, he pulled the

Juletty

twine string that hung through a hole in the door, and lifted the inner latch and entered. He placed a rush-bottomed chair for me, and stirred the fire to a crackling blaze. I drew close to it and spread my hands to the grateful warmth.

"Cold?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Here," and he handed me a glass of brandy.

I drained it, and then turned to give him the empty glass; he was laying the table deftly as any woman might.

In a deep iron baker, over the glowing coals, he baked corn dodgers; on a griddle fried huge slices of red ham and made excellent gravy.

The odors were deliciously appetizing, and when seated on a wooden stool at the bare deal table I did full justice to mine host's cooking. He eyed me curiously, doubtless wondering at my good appetite under such circumstances, finally asking: "Do you understand' whut I fetched ye hyar fer?"

"To scare me, I think," I said good naturedly and easily.

"No, by hell! I don't want'er skeer ye; I jes

In Which Hunter and Game are Snared

waited ter gin ye er showin' fer yer alley. I jes' pintedly couldn't fling yer in ther craik 'thout givin' yer one more chanct; but this is shore ther las' statement I'm gwineter make erbout it: I'll set hyar 'ith yer till midnight; ef yer don't gimme yer oath ter let thet still-hunt erlone, an' clear out an' min' yer own bizness, I'll jes take yer out thar an' drap yer in ther craik. Ther water'll do ther res'."

It was certainly a cold-blooded announcement of intended murder. But the man looked so unconcerned and evidently considered the matter of so little moment I felt encouraged to think he only meant to frighten me into submission, and said: "Come, Al, you have carried your joke far enough now; open the door and let me go home. I have no doubt but Jim has told Juliet that I had intended to take supper with her this evening, and has also told her that I left him in your company, so if I do not arrive on time she will have some one out to look for me. I told her you were not as friendly to me as you might be."

It was useless to threaten him with discovery; he was utterly indifferent to such suggestions and only answered carelessly:

Juletty

"It's ther mistake uv yer life ef yer think I'm er foolin'. I'm in dead hard earnest.

"Thar ain't no danger uv people er huntin' fer yer 'nother; I c'n depen' on leetle Jimmie."

Then Al's lips parted in the distortion that served him for a smile; he shook his head and kicked an inoffensive bit of wood. "Yer air ther all-firedest fool! Yer think yerself so smart, too. I raik'n 'tain't no harm ter tell yer how cute leetle Jimmie were. Cose he did'n do ther changin' er them jugs at ther stump, but he seen ter it thet ther feller whut did do hit got ther chanct. Now wuzn't yer er fool ter b'lieve in thet study bizness? Hang ther study! Ther whole blame thing wuz fixt on purpose fer that stump doin's, an' yer'd er knowed hit long ergo if yer hadn' been head over heels in love 'ith Juletty. But I will say this much fer yer—yer hain't no *born* fool, yer jes' er *woman's* fool, an' yer couldn' see no harm in none er Juletty's folks. Jimmie done tole me how he got cher ter look at pidgins, an' taste outen his jug, an' sech foolishness, while he wuz er givin' t'other man a chanct ter change yer jug; Jimmie's er sharp un."

In Which Hunter and Game are Snared

Al chuckled at my folly and I was too mortified to speak.

"I done tole yer that much I'll jes make er clean breas' uv it," he continued meditatively. "I tole yer I run that still, an' hit's er fac'; but I hain't tole yer whar I got ther money. Thet still I'm er runnin' cost er thousan' dollars ef hit cost er cent, an' I never had that much spon in all my life. 'Sides that, ef I had er thousan' dollars whut in hell would I want with er still er anythin' else? I'd jes' lay up an' live on ther interes' er my money. Now, ther reason I'm er tellin' yer this is ter show yer thet it hain't fer my own sake I'm er goin' ter put yer outen ther way; hit's fer ther sake uv the feller whut's runnin' ther still with his money. I ain't goin' ter tell no names, but I will say thet if this feller wuz ter be foun' out 'twould erbout kill Juletty. I b'lieve he would er ben, too, long ergo, ef it had'n ben fer thet hunderd dollars Mr. Lincque offered fer him, thet diverted spicion uv folks whut did'n have right good, keen hoss sense."

I winced at his inference, but said: "Of course, Al, I know by this time that the owner of that illicit still is old Mr. Lincque."

Juletty

"Hit mought be, an' ergin it moughtent," was the reply.

"Then he reads his Bible to divert suspicion, too, I suppose?"

"No, no, he don't; he's ez good er Christian ez ever lived. He don't drink, ner smoke, ner chew, ner cuss, an' he does more charity'n anybody; allus doin' somebody er good turn. Yessir, Uncle Jeems is er good man, an' this stillin' don't prove nothin' 'pon yeth ergin 'im. 'Sides, everybody knows so darn well thet Uncle Sam ain't got no bizness interferin' 'ith er leetle privit stillin' thet's jestice ter git erway 'ith 'im. But thet hain't hyar ner thar; ther queschin is: Air yer goin' off ter Juletty, or air yer goin' ter stay 'ith me?"

"You force me to stay."

"I hate ter ac' ugly, I swan I do; but hit's you thet's er usin' force. Jes' swar yer'll quit ther hunt, an' I'll let yer out in er minnit an' thank yer fer ther privilege, an' 'scort yer home ter Juletty."

I had no further doubt as to his real intention after the urgency of that speech. The man meant murder; more than that, he had no sense of sin in the deed; to protect his

In Which Hunter and Game are Snared

friends, he felt he would do God service in murdering me.

"Don't say 'can't' no more till twelve er'clock," he said, and laid his large silver watch open on the table between us.

I compared his time with mine and grumbled aloud:

"You are ten minutes ahead of me; you must give me the advantage of that ten minutes."

He carefully turned back the hands of his watch, remarking:

"I'm er givin' yer thet ten minnits, fer my watch is allers karect, an' haint varied in ten year er ha'r's breadth."

I faced about, leaned forward so my eyes were close to his, and asked him sternly and slowly, that he might realize what he did:

"Al, do you really mean to murder me for a few dollars?"

He glared at me angrily.

"I hain't hired ter do this thing."

"No; but you would do murder in order to make money from illegal distilling."

"Dam yer 'licit 'stillin'; I done tole yer thet's all humbug. I hain't er puttin' yer out

Juletty

ther way to save my own hide, I tell yer ; I'm er doin' hit fer Juletty."

It was a waste of words to argue with him.

The situation was strained, but by no means hopeless.

I felt sure that Jimmie knew of Al's intention when he saw him decoy me off to the creek, and I thought it would be impossible for his childish heart (and James was little more than a child) to endure the knowledge that murder was being done in the lonely cabin on the hillside. I fancied how he would be haunted by a vision of the foul deed, and finally would be overcome with pity for the fate of his friend, for such I had been to the boy. Thinking these things I did not, as I have said, feel hopeless, but continually looked for the help that Jim would send when I failed to turn up at his house for supper. I did not depend on that alone, however, but racked my brain for some feasible plan of escape in case the hoped-for help should fail me. Only one plan appeared to be practicable—I would keep silent; I would utter not one word, and Al might, after his hard day's work, grow weary and fall asleep, thus giving me an opportunity

In Which Hunter and Game are Snared

to slip quietly out the latched door and escape him in the darkness. There could not be a question of battling with his strength; even had I been my usual self, I would have been as a child to him.

Furtively I watched his face for some sign of fatigue; but he continued to gaze unwinkingly into the fire, as if hypnotized.

Again and again I glanced from his face to the open watch on the table; finally the hands pointed to half-past ten, and the gray eyes were still wide open.

I had only one hour and a half to live unless some one interfered.

While the thought was but half formed Al sighed, folded his arms, and closed his eyes.

My hope revived.

But he was fighting the feeling of sleep, and again the keen eyes were opened and fixed on me.

Then they sought the firelight again; closed slowly once or twice, and failed to open again.

I shuffled my feet noisily on the bare floor.

He did not stir; his big chest rose and fell regularly, and I could hear his heavy breathing.

Juletty

Again I passed my foot scrapingly across the planks ; still he made no movement.

My heart-throbs were almost stifling.

I arose from my chair ; half turned my body as I did so, that I might in that way save the extra step it would have otherwise required, and stood a half second facing the door.

Softly then I crept across the room ; slowly and stiffly, lest even that motion should betray me, I stretched forth my arm, and felt my whole body thrill with hope as I placed my fingers lightly on the latchstring, drew it to me slowly and gently, oh, how gently, and—thank heaven—sprang joyously through the opened door, with—Al's iron grip on my shoulder.

" 'Tis er bad night," he said, carelessly, as if in answer to a question from me ; " ther win's er raisin' and hit's er turnin' chilly. Better draw up clost ter ther foire."

I made no resistance—what was the use—but turned and walked back with him to the fireplace.

The watch said half-past eleven.

One more half hour of life.

In Which Hunter and Game are Snared

As he had said, the wind was rising. It swept in great gusts down the wide, gaping chimney, beating blazes and ashes half across the huge hearth.

Each moment the storm seemed to lash itself into a greater fury, and howled through the neighboring trees of the forest like a regiment of fiends.

"I'm er feered hit's er comin' on ter storm," said Al lightly.

The tempest had no terrors for him.

"Up u-u-ugh! Oo-oo-oo-oooh," moaned the wind. Then more angily, more loudly, more swiftly, it shook the door.

"Ugh! Oogh! Oogh!" it shrieked.

Al had neglected to replenish the fire, and it had died down; there was neither lamp nor candle, and the partially darkened room was lighted fitfully by flash after flash of lightning, while the frightful peals of thunder scarcely gave pause. There was sound of snapping limbs and falling trees in the distance, giving warning of evil to come.

"Cra-a-a-sh!"

Close at hand was that last furious sound, and for the first time Al showed that he had a

Juletty

special interest in the wild work of the tempestuous night.

"Thet's my pine, by ther chimbley," he said.

Then crash succeeded crash, as if the entire woods were being destroyed.

Ah, what was that?

Far off, so that we bent our heads to catch the sound, we heard above the crash of falling trees and pealing thunder a muffled whine as of a beast in mortal pain.

Nearer it came and louder.

Nearer, nearer, louder, louder; all sounds were shrouded in the hideous din as it approached us.

Never had roar so unearthly greeted my ears.

We started from our seats and gazed at each other, helpless before that passionate wail of outraged nature.

Then faintly above it came to us the low toll of a bell!

A bell? And tolling? How?

It drew nearer, and told of the work of the tempest in hellish glee; as never before its very words smote on our hearing.

In Which Hunter and Game are Snared

"Death, death! Death, death!" It laughed in telling.

"Er ghost bell," Al's white lips murmured, in superstition.

"Our death-knell," I whispered.

Scarcely had I spoken when the cabin shook in every timber, reeled like a drunken thing, was lifted bodily from its foundations—then overstrained nature gave way, and I became unconscious.

CHAPTER XI

In Which I Think the Game Well Worth
the Candle

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH I THINK THE GAME WELL WORTH THE CANDLE

Is it the infinite wonder of Nature's infinite moods that fills our mind with amazement each time we watch with awed eyes and thrilling hearts the placidity that always succeeds the tempest?

I recovered sense the morning after that terrific storm to find the air a-tremble with Spring sunshine, and filled with the stimulating fragrance of wet earth, sweetest of odors; to hear the cheery twitter, twitter of many birds, and to note how busy they were, as they flirted with each other among the branches of fallen trees, regardless that death and horror had been abroad on the wings of the night wind.

I watched them with childlike, irresponsible interest in their motions, and then fell to wondering, listlessly and vaguely, why I should

Juletty

have spent the preceding night out of doors, and to have a feeling of impatience that my limbs were numb and lifeless.

All at once, as if from the shock of a sudden blow, I knew ; recalled the hideous experiences of the night, and was sensible of a surprise to be still alive.

Remembered Al, and turned my head in search of him.

I had not far to look.

There, so close that my hand might have smoothed from the dark low brow the be-draggled black locks, lay my enemy.

Enemy no longer.

There was no need to fear that motionless figure.

No need to call, to touch, to examine him.

No hand but Death could have bestowed the strange, new dignity he wore.

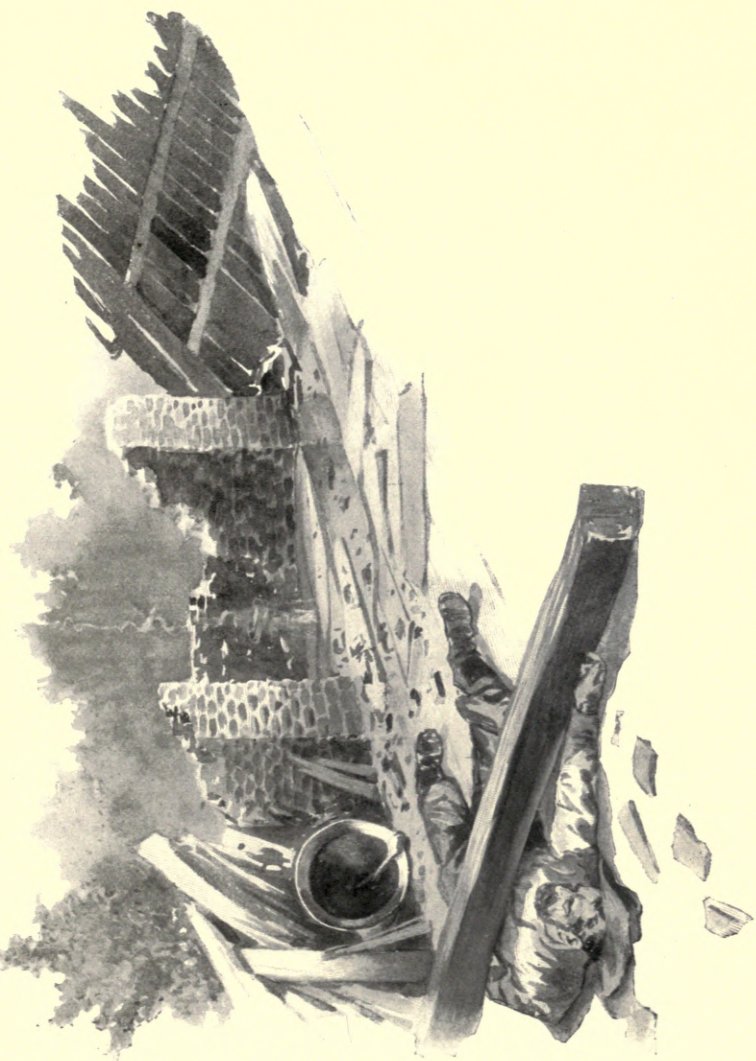
Tender, gentle, beautiful death.

Man's best, but least appreciated friend.

A heavy beam from the cabin roof lay across his chest ; he had perished in the downfall of his home.

I think he would have liked it thus.

Poor child of Nature, and of poverty ; filled



I Think the Game Worth the Candle

with innate nobility, crushed and forced back upon itself by environment.

From the marsh the lily grows ?

Yes, but it also sinks and perishes there.

Another beam confined my lower limbs, and it was that which had deadened them. With a great effort I pulled myself to a sitting posture, and reached forward my strong, uninjured arms to free myself.

Folly !

As well might a babe have tried to remove the great rough log ; and I sank back exhausted by even that slight exertion, so greatly had the night told upon my strength.

Then I began to speculate, with some slight degree of interest, as to how long I might be compelled to lie there, with my face so near the face of the dead.

It was an idle thought ; I had no power of active thinking. I felt no dread of that silent figure ; no repulsion for it ; not the slightest sense of awe at its presence.

On the contrary, I had a certain grim pleasure in wondering if it could be possible that Al should know I had escaped him. Again I thought of the probability of my staying

Juletty

as I was the entire day. Such might easily be the case; each family of my friends would think me with the other; and, unless some intercourse was had between the farms, I might lie there indefinitely. The thought was not a pleasing one, and roused me more decidedly.

Suddenly a new terror awakened all my faculties to their normal state; glancing round, I saw, issuing from the despoiled hearthstone, a tiny column of blue smoke, and realized that a spread of the fire meant torture to me. It was then I set to work systematically, fear lending force to my labors. What should I do? My hands, unaided, were helpless to work with the heavy beam. Near me was the huge iron poker, which had been a menace the night before, but which now offered a chance of escape.

Reaching for it, I found that it lay beyond my grasp.

Strain as I might, only the very tips of my fingers touched it. Weak as I was, I was easily discouraged, and soon gave up, twisting over to my right side, that I might await the approach of the fire without seeing it.

I Think the Game Worth the Candle

But, as I moved, a large knife I carried in my trouser's pocket caught between my leg and the beam, and the pressure bruised my flesh painfully. The pain brought another gleam of hope; wriggling back to my former posture, I slipped my hand into the pocket, and brought forth the knife; opened the large blade half way, thus forming of blade and handle a hook, with which I caught the curved part of the poker and drew it to me. It was an awkward instrument to handle, but I finally succeeded in inserting the end of it under the end of the beam, near my body, and, using it as a lever, prized the encumbering timber upward a little—a very little.

It required many such efforts, slipping the iron a little closer to me each time, before I could entirely withdraw my aching limbs. I lay still, rubbing the numbness from them, before attempting to crawl toward the fire, which had made no headway. Finally I crept slowly along—passing, as I did so, the bell which had tolled with such shockingly dismal effect in the night. I saw it was a church bell; the cyclone had torn it from a small country church, a mile or more from the cabin, toyed with it for a time, and

Juletty

then cast it aside, as a spoiled child tosses away a tiresome plaything.

Arrived at the base of the ruined chimney, I glanced about me for some means of extinguishing the fire that had caused my uneasiness. The deep baker in which Al had cooked his corn dodgers was there, and the rain had filled it with water. I seized it eagerly—but—where was the fire?

The hearth had been swept by the wind, so that not a cinder remained.

Whence, then, that wave of blue smoke that still curled upward? It issued from between the limestones that made the hearth. My heart thrilled with the conviction; my hands trembled; I was on the point of discovering that elusive still, though I should not have known it but for Al's revelations of the night. I knew, if I could only force up one of those big stones, I would find the still in Al's cellar, so arranged that its smoke issued from the cabin chimney. That explained the need of a fire constantly kept up; it was to disguise the still smoke.

Nervously, I thrust the handle of the poker into a crevice of the hearth, and prized up one

I Think the Game Worth the Candle

of the stones, tossing as I did so a small fragment of smoking wood from the interstice.

That was the cause of the smoke; and there was no sign whatever of any cellar under the cabin.

Al had simply lied to me.

It was to shield some one.

Could it be, in truth, the sanctimonious older Lincque?

I swore a solemn oath, there, in the presence of the dead, that I would find out.

Then voices, shouts, and footsteps told of a party in search of me, and I called to them my whereabouts.



CHAPTER XII

In Which I Turn Fox Hunter

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH I TURN FOX HUNTER

TO love and to be loved is bliss at any time. To love and to be loved in leafy June is a beatitude. Lazy, fragrant, languorous, strawberry June! Her days are visions of golden loveliness, her nights are dreams of silvery beauty; ideal times to drive over ideal roads with one's beloved, who knows that thoughts are tangible things and need no language for interpretation.

Juliet's glorious whiskey-colored eyes took on a softer, mellower glow, and the odor of her auburn tresses was sweeter to the sense. Grandmother was regretful that so much of evil had occurred during my visit to Skileland, but I truthfully assured her they were the most happy and delightful months of my life.

Many "parties," picnics, cave excursions and the usual country pleasures I had enjoyed,

Juletty

and by way of a grand finish Uncle Charles arranged a fox hunt for my special pleasure.

"I want you to see how we hunt Mr. Fox in the Pennyrile," he said. "Come over to my house to-morrow evening to supper. You'd better ride Henry's gray, and come in hunting clothes. There will be no ladies. Just a dozen or so jolly hunters to spend the night and enjoy a chase. You will find it a trifle different from the Blue Grass chase—rather a smoother matter, but dogs, horses, and men, I promise you, of a quality as excellent as you can find in the State."

I believed him without hesitation, and was glad to find myself riding to my uncle's, with Mitch for company, on the appointed afternoon.

"How does it happen that you are going, Mitch?" I asked him.

"Humph! Me er gwine! Don't I allers go? I knows eber man whut'll be dar fum eberwheres. 'Sides, they couldn't hab no hunt less'n I wuz dar to whup in de obstrepolous dawgs."

"You say you were reared in my country, Mitch?"

In Which I Turn Fox Hunter

"Yassah! Yassah, I's raised right in erbout two mile uv Lebnon. I 'member well dat ole hill we all done growed up on, all covered wid myrtle."

"Well, Mitch, there is always a greenback like this in my purse for niggers that were reared in my town."

Mitch's white teeth gleamed as he pocketed the bill.

"Yassah, Marse Jack; thank yer. I'm er bleegeed ter ye, sah. You's gittin' more'n more like ole Marster eber day, Marse Jack."

I felt deeply grateful, for I knew Mitch had reached the pinnacle of flattery when he likened me to ole Marster.

We found Uncle Charles on the front porch waiting to give us a hunter's welcome and accentuate it by an iced mint julep. Mitch was commended for his early arrival and replied:

"I'se des boun' ter come soon an' see all dem dawgs whut's er comin', an' get a good chancet ter show de niggers, whut's er comin wid dem, how ornery deir dawgs looks sider ourn."

Uncle Charles smiled indulgently, and ordered him to put his dogs in the kennel

Juletty

and wait at the steps to receive those of the guests. Seated on the end of the porch, behind a pillar, out of Mitch's sight, I was an amused and interested listener to his greetings to the various arrivals.

My cousin, Dick Skiles, rode up on a large bay mare—it must needs be a large horse that carried Dick through a hunt—and was followed by three handsome hounds.

“Ebenin, Marse Dick, ebenin’; how is yer, anyhow?” asked Mitch, the obsequious. “Lute’s er lookin’ fine, Marse Dick; I’ll take keer uv ’er, an’ see ’at she gits started fa’r an’ squar. Thanky, sah, thanky,” and he pocketed his fee.

He only addressed the family by the title “Marse”; so, when the next rider came up and dismounted, he changed to suit:

“Ebenin’, Misser Taggart; I hain’ seed yer fer er long time. How’s all de folks up ter Lexin’ton? I’s raised up at Lexin’ton, an’ I knows put’ near eberbody up dar.”

Another bill rewarded Mitch’s duplicity, for a Kentuckian considers it *noblesse oblige* to make a substantial donation to every negro who was “raised in his country.”



In Which I Turn Fox Hunter

But Mr. Taggart had passed on and Mitch was entrapping another unwary patriot.

"Ebenin', Misser Caldwell, ebenin'; eberbody well in Danville? I's raised in Danville; an' I 'member whut er fine farm you got, jes es well ef I'd seed hit yistiddy."

Mitch chuckled, as he received the return for that judicious compliment.

"Ebenin, Misser Hundley, ebenin'; I is glad ter see yer onct more shore. Hit allers makes me feel good ter se anybody fum my ole home; I's raised in sight er yo' place, jes' erbout six mile fum Springfiel'; mighty putty place too, Mr. Hundley."

But portly Mr. Hundley was too old a bird to be caught with chaff, and stalked off with only a grunt in response.

"Stingy ole debbil," Mitch muttered.

I laughed aloud, and left my watch, but I daresay that Mitch worked the "raised in yo' country" racket on each guest who chanced to have his home outside Warren County, and was a richer man for his wisdom.

Supper was delicious; cold baked ham, in broad red slices, of almost transparent thinness; light rolls, with golden butter; dainty corn

Juletty

cakes, chicken salad, and lettuce and onions, creamy sweet milk, and thick, rich buttermilk, with floating, tiny grains of butter, which was—well iced—a drink for a colonel; and fragrant coffee and iced tea.

It was a merry party of thirteen farmers.

There was no haste to be through that meal; even the charms of the chase were forgotten, and time slipped past unnoted.

Over the last course we lingered longest.

A large bowl of crushed ice was placed before our host; at his left, a silver tray of glasses, with spoons in them, a pitcher of water, and a silver bowl of sugar. To his right, a huge decanter of whiskey and a bowl of mint.

Like a poet and an artist, he dropped the white cubes and poured the water, stirred gently a moment, and added the red liquor and odorous mint. Black cake was the pretext for the drink, and, lounging in our chairs, we spent the time in jest and story, some of which I remember to this day.

The majority of the older men had been classmates at Centre, and, as usual at their meetings, recalled college pranks.

Mr. Caldwell began :

In Which I Turn Fox Hunter

"Charles, do you remember Bob's mule ride?"

Uncle Charles rubbed his hair to more than its accustomed gloss in a vain effort to recall that particular prank before replying, "I don't believe I do; what about it?"

"Well," said Mr. Caldwell, "if you don't remember it you didn't see it, for you couldn't forget it if you had seen it.

"A favorite amusement with the college boys on county court day was to ride the country horses that were sure to be hitched at various posts to await the home-going of the owners. Bob was usually on hand to have one of the first choices, but one day found himself late; every horse had been appropriated and nothing was left but a sleek, well-fed mule.

"But Bob wasn't going to be cheated out of a ride by any mule that ever breathed, so he took a stage attitude and exclaimed: 'For lo! these many moons have I yearned for the exhilaration of muleback exercise, and now is the winter of my discontent made glorious summer by this glossy son of a donkey.'

"Then he took off his hat and pranced up to the mule, and bowed, and begged him to be

Juletty

patient, and kept up a lot of fool talk till finally he got into the saddle, and then implored him 'not to fling up his heels and fling off his load.'

"The rest of us were in roars of laughter, and knew no mule could 'fling' Bob if he were once securely mounted.

"When this was accomplished we all started, with Bob in the lead. I know you remember Lexington Avenue, where the female institute was located, that sheltered more pretty girls than any building in America; well, just in front of that institute Bob must stoop over to fix his stirrups and attract attention. Right then a little zephyr that's playing along with nothing else to do got in its mischief; it just picked off Bob's hat and shied it right square across the mule's nose.

"You can bet there was a jump and a plunge, and then Bob and the mule went careering down Lexington Avenue like a streak of greased lightning. Bob certainly knew how to ride, but it put him up to all he knew, and a death grip on the stiff little mane of the hybrid, too, to keep his seat.

"Every girl at Caldwell Institute was enjoy-

In Which I Turn Fox Hunter

ing high noon in the front yard when that reckless pair went clattering by.

"Bob was a sight; his face was red as a gobbler's snout in May; he always wore his hair long, and it flew on the breeze; the rascal never had on but one pair of trousers at a time, and those were pushed by his saddle flaps nearly to his knees, and of course there shone his big bare calves.

"The mule got worse scared at every jump he made, and turned his head from side to side (as nothing but a mule and a gander can), and kept up a braying to beat the band.

"When they reached the end of the long street Bob spied a negro, and he gasped out—you know Bob never forgot to be funny—'Head us, uncle, for God's sake, head us!'

"'Deed I will, Marse Bob,' the old nigger yelled.

"Like a fool he rushed out into the middle of the street, throwing up his hat and hollering to him to 'Wo! Wo dar!'

"Well, he woed.

"But he wheeled around in such short order that Bob came near tumbling off (and I reckon if ever a man prayed to fall, it was Bob, but

Juletty

he *couldn't let go*), and there's no world if that abominable mule didn't run straight back up that street, past that girls' school, right to his hitching post, and stop as sudden as he started.

"That was too much; the mule stopped, but Bob went on over his head in the dust.

"But still in a good humor, Bob got up, rubbed himself, and looked so comical that we all went into fresh roars of laughter. He said:

"*'That's what makes me 'spise er mule.'*"

As usual, one story suggested another, and Mr. Taggart asked:

"Did any of you hear old Buck Vermilion preach?"

No one had, and he proceeded to relate his experience.

"Well, when it was noised abroad that old Buck was to preach in Danville, Bob and I, who had heard how eccentric the old fellow was, determined to hear him. He was to hold forth on Sabbath afternoon and we were early on the scene of action.

"We put a boy on the gate-post to watch for the first sight of him, and he soon shouted:

"*'He's er comin! He's er comin!'*

"Then there was a grand rush for the front.



In Which I Turn Fox Hunter

"I can shut my eyes and see that picture now.

"It was in October and everything was yellow; the maples, the dirt road, the sunshine, the old horse, and Buck himself.

"The horse was lean and lank, and travelled in a flat-footed trot that would have jolted the teeth out of any other rider; in fact, all that spared Buck that calamity was the fact that he had none to shake out. His cow-hide shoes were yellow with dust, his homespun trousers were yellow, and in place of a coat he wore an old red dressing gown, sprinkled with yellow palm leaves. His head was bare as a billiard ball, but his congregations had laughed so often at that, he wore a wig of dust-colored curls, held in place by a ribbon which tied piquantly under his chin."

"Oh, hold on, whut cher givin' us?" some one interrupted.

"I'm telling the solemn truth; and added to all these shades of yellow, his skin was the color of brownish yellow parchment, and the whole man was surmounted by a gray-yellow felt hat.

"Of course every eye followed him as, with his saddle bags on his shoulder, he went into the

Juletty

pulpit where the elegant and eloquent Doctor William Breckenridge had entertained a congregation for two hours the Sunday before.

“He dived into the saddle bags and brought out an old worn hymn-book, and opened his tobacco-stained, toothless mouth to announce a hymn, when he suddenly remembered something that scared him; his jaw dropped, and his eyes stuck out a minute, but his faith came to the rescue, and he lifted his right hand for silence, and prayed as devoutly as any preacher you ever heard at a funeral:

“‘Lawd! feed my hongry hawgs, fer I fergot hit.’

“Every one laughed aloud; but that did not abash the preacher; he waited for quiet, and then read his hymn and turned to Mr. McDowell, who sat on the front seat, and asked:

“‘Brother Mc, will yer gin this hyar chune er histe?’

“Mr. McDowell shook his head, and Buck said:

“‘Wall, I hain’t much on the sing, but I reckon I’ll haveter histe ’er myse’f.’

“And he did; but he had to sing it all alone, for no human could have followed that tune.

In Which I Turn Fox Hunter

“He preached about the journey through the Wilderness, and I wish I could remember some of the sermon, but I only recall a few remarks. I specially remember this—and he said it through his nose, whining and catching his breath audibly after each sentence: ‘And Aaron made a ca’f, brethern and sisteren, er gole ca’f, an’ he made it outen year-rings. I do nacherelly suppose he was the putties’ cree-ter uv his specie ever seen ’pon top of yeth. Ef thet ca’f had er ben at ther late Boyle County fa’r, hit would er took ever blue string thar.’

“I remember, too, his benediction, and it would have seemed blasphemous from any other lips, but Buck was seriously earnest; he looked impressive and prayed:

“‘An’ now, Lawd Gawd, as we-all go fum henst, we pray Thee fer ter presarve us, an’ pickle us, an’ put us in a glass jar, an’ put the jar in Thine own leetle privit clawset, Lawd, erway back on ther top shelf, an’ lock ther dore, an’ put ther key down deep in Thy breeches pocket, whar ther devil cain’t fin’ hit. AMEN.’”

When the laughter that followed this anec-

Juletty

dote had subsided, Uncle Charles led the way to where our horses waited to bear us to the hunt. We pulled our soft hats well down over our ears, and I stood aside to watch the others mount; as they did so I realized that rarely, if ever, had I seen so many fine horses. Each man there bestrode an aristocrat among Kentucky saddlers. No "parking," no dinner-jolting trotters among them; a Pennyrile Kentuckian would rather chop wood for digestion than to be caught going such gaits; each could "running-walk" at a motion like the soft smoothness of a rocking-chair, or "rack" to keep up with a runner, and never jar the tips of a boy's first silken mustache.

When I sprang to my saddle I found Henry's gray as good as the best; it was rejuvenating, exhilarating beyond compare to feel his elastic step beneath me, for he touched the earth lightly, as if he feared soiling his dainty feet.

And when he heard the cry of the loosed dogs, he tossed his pretty head, pricked forward his delicate ears, and, with distended nostrils quivering, was as ready for the joys of the chase as any man in the lot.

In Which I Turn Fox Hunter

Too-too-too-toot! Toot!"

That was the mellow hunting-horn, as Mitch led the hounds out the gate; they were fairly dancing; before, behind, beside him, they pressed with sharp little whines and cries of ecstasy. It was their delight as well as ours, and now and then he had to reprove them for too great eagerness, talking to and soothing them with caressing tones, till they settled to a steady trot after his horse.

It was a perfect night.

The great round moon was laughing at our party of grown-up children out for a frolic; and as she laughed she pelted us with silvery beams that filled our hearts with gladness and good cheer. There was, as is usual with fox hunters, little talking after we left the main road; there was too much interest for that, and when we gathered at the appointed place we were just as silent waiting for what Uncle Charles had promised us would be the grandest serenade of our lives.

Not a dog was to be seen.

They had scattered in search of a trail.

What an uncanny picture we made in the shadow of the great forest trees!

Juletty

Thirteen was our unlucky number.

Thirteen mounted men, with slouch hats pulled down as if for disguise, bent forward listening in the moonlight.

Listening !

That was all. Straining every nerve and bating our very breath in the intensity of listening.

At length our patience was rewarded.

“Yelp ! Yelp ! Yelp !”

We looked at Uncle Charles for interpretation.

“Humph,” he said, “that is old Ballie ; biggest liar you ever saw ; the trail may be three days’ old.”

Patience again.

Then, clear and sweet as a well-blown bugle :

“Yeow ! Yeow, yeow, yeow,” sounded a tenor across a distant knob.

Truly, a fox hunter is a born musician, else how could he revel so in the cry of his dogs ?

Uncle Charles lifted his hand warningly and whispered “Sh-sh-sh,” and I regarded with awful admiration the accuracy of his ear.

“Ye-ow, ye-ow, ye-ow !”

In a carefully guarded undertone he informed the other listeners :

In Which I Turn Fox Hunter

"That's Lassie! Always in the lead. She never fooled me."

The tenor was followed by a thunderous bass.

"Wow, wow, wow! Wow-wow-wow! WOW-WOW-WOW-WOW!"

Without a moment's hesitation Uncle Charles gave the name:

"Come on, Byron! Come on, old boy!"

In rapid succession were added many tenors, basses, and sopranos, and as each reached our ears that remarkable man named them after this fashion;

"Go it, Dixie; you'll get there! Come along, Banks; don't be afraid, old boy! That's it, my Chimes—best tongue among 'em! Steady, Nightingale, steady little geer!; don't fly the track. Hold on, Rock, hold on!"

He kept that up through at least twenty different notes; it was like a miracle to me.

Round and round the hill circled the fox, followed by the baying hounds. It was such music as these ears have seldom heard.

Life! Motion! Rhythm!

The very poetry of music rose and fell, and swelled and died, and rose again on the crisp night air.

Juletty

No prima donna neath electric glare can ever thrill my soul again while memory holds that scene.

The tender moonlight on the diamond dew that gemmed the grass, the trees, the very rails, in Nature's lavishness of touch ; the music—living music, natural music—which gushed from the untrained, unstrained throats of twenty flying hounds. Suddenly it ceased.

Then came a yelp, half whine ; no music in that.

"Lost trail," muttered my uncle, and lifted his reins. The horse obeyed the sign and sped away toward the sound ; we followed. On to the edge of the creek, at the point whence the railway bridge was suspended.

There we found the entire pack in confusion.

Savage yelps, piteous whines of disappointment greeted us, as they darted in and out of the water, snapping now and then one mouthful, but too impatient to drink.

"Where is he, Lass? Find him, old lady, find him!" Uncle Charles said, caressingly, to his favorite.

She whined, wagged her tail, ran across the

In Which I Turn Fox Hunter

stream, hunted wildly here and there, and then ran back to her master.

It was inexplicable.

The moonlight was clear as day, and we could see everything about us, but the only living thing we had run upon was a loose-jointed, shirt-sleeved giant leaning against the rail fence that surrounded his garden.

Riding up to this individual, Uncle Charles said affably :

"Hello, John! How long you been standing there?"

"Aw er hour er sech er matter," he drawled indifferently.

"The thunder you have; then why don't you tell us what became of that fox?"

"Cause yer never axed me," said John.

But he had seen too much of that which his soul loved to continue silent about it, and quickly warmed to the subject.

"I be goldarned if thet leetle creeter didn't do ther sharpest thing ever I seen er animal do. I 'uz in baid; but when I heered ther dawgs I got up an' slipt on my britches, an' crope outen ther house ter lissen. I wuz jes' er leanin' hyar, er lookin' up ther railroad,

Juletty

when he shot into sight like er streek uv red lightnin', an' come er steppin' down ther rails. I wondered what he'd do when he gotter ther bridge; an', sah, he jes kep' on like 'twarn't no bridge, er jumpin' fum tie ter tie like fun. Well, when he gotter them braces whut yer see er holdin' up ther posts uv ther bridge, he jes hopt down whar er brace jines er post—blamed ef he didn't—and he scrooched up in thet angle like he were er angle hisse'f, an' sot thar an' hugged hisse'f an' laughed at them dawgs till they all got ercrosst ther craik. Then whut does ther leetle cuss do but jump on ther bridge ergin an' track hisse'f back ter ther knobs."

The man closed his story with a loud laugh, in which we joined. But the laugh was interrupted by a triumphant bay from old Rock, the best hunter of the pack.

He had fidgeted around the bridge till his keen scent found the fresh trail, and once more in full cry they were after Reynard like the wind.

Away, away, madly, furiously they dashed.

And away, away, we followed.

After ten minutes of hard running the cry

In Which I Turn Fox Hunter

once more changed. The experienced hunters of that party knew its meaning. "They've caught him! they've caught him!" they cried.

And when I rode up to them Mr. Taggart was standing close to the ruins of Al Lincque's cabin with the brush in his hand.

He triumphed over us for a time; but the night was fine, and more than one Sir Fox was tempted to pit his speed against that of the dogs, and give the rest of us a chance at the brush. It was but a little while till Lassie gave tongue again, and away like the wind went men and pack to answer her cry.

I, however, remained behind unnoticed. The ruins of that little cabin home had brought back to me so vividly the night of terror I spent there that I lost all heart for sport. Having caught my horse's bridle to the toppling rail of the worm fence, I seated myself on the base of the ruined chimney. The low murmur of the creek as its waters dashed over the stones was pleasant to my ears, and where the stream made an abrupt horseshoe bend I could see the steep bank clad in a coat of green. The vine which clambered there was graceful and fairly covered every inch of the

Juletty

red clay bank. It was an object of admiration to the neighborhood, but of dread as well, for it was poison ivy, and any near approach to it was exceedingly dangerous. The very water about its base and for some distance below was unsafe for bathers, so powerful was the poison it exhaled.

I was in a contemplative mood and fell to wondering how many of nature's beauties might hide a heart as foul under a surface as fair as that of the vine, when my meditations were interrupted by the voices of the hounds again in full cry. I turned with bent head to listen, and as I did so there flashed from the woodland into the cleared space a small, slender figure that darted past me on to the bank of the creek. It paused like a wee black shadow there above the poison ivy, and then as the dogs drew nearer slipped down and disappeared behind the heavy curtain.

The hounds, however, were on another trail, and I smiled to think that the little chap's cunning had been useless.

Then I was fired by an ambition to have his brush for Juliet, and also to mystify my party as to how I had obtained it.

In Which I Turn Fox Hunter

With that object in view I settled my revolver handily in my pocket and strolled over to the ivy bank.

I had no fear of the vine, for I am one of the fortunate few who are immune to its insidious attacks. With this knowledge I unhesitatingly grasped the huge trunk in one hand and slid down the almost perpendicular steep.

I slipped to within a foot or less of the water before I could find a secure footing. There I caught a great mass of vine and peered behind it for my game.

Like some curtain-draped door, a large part of it swayed aside and I could see an opening quite deep enough for me to enter in an erect posture.

I knew immediately that I had chanced on an unknown cave, and supposing the fox had a den within and had gone to it for safety, I entered.

It was dark as a stack of black cats, and as I groped along I kept one hand gliding over the wall, while the other held my revolver, cocked for instant use, should occasion arise.



CHAPTER XIII

In Which the Game is Taken Red-handed

CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH THE GAME IS TAKEN RED-HANDED

I HAD travelled but a short distance in the darkness of the new cavern when a faint, familiar odor assailed my nostrils.

I stopped and sniffed the air like a hound on a cold trail.

It was there—pleasant, pungent, unmistakable.

The smell of whiskey.

Chance had done for me what perseverance and determination had failed to accomplish ; I had no doubt but that I had by chance stumbled on my game. I must walk circumspectly, because alone. Should I find the guilty parties at their illicit work, and should I in turn be discovered by them, there would necessarily be a battle ; experience had taught me that would be a most one-sided affair, so as I crept along I sincerely hoped to find the cave unoccupied, and thus have a better showing to inspect the

Juletty

secrets it had kept so well. Regretfully remembering that I had on the preceding day telegraphed my resignation of a marshal's commission to Washington, I moved on slowly, feeling the way by sliding my foot over the ground lightly before resting it for a firm step. I had taken perhaps about twenty steps when I encountered an obstacle to further progress. Thinking it in all likelihood a stone, I endeavored to step over the obstruction, but was unable to do so. Then, before passing around, I concluded to examine it, as it might prove a key to the mystery ahead of me in the darkness. I feared to strike a match lest I rouse the possible enemy further on, so simply passed my hands over and about it. Without difficulty I knew it was a barrel, and as I could not move it, concluded it must be full; the odor it exhaled proved its contents—whiskey.

I almost shouted aloud in my pleasure of discovery.

At last I would triumph over grandfather's theory that I was sure to fail, for there was the illicit still—at least, in smelling distance. What matter if I were no longer a legal

In Which the Game is Taken Red-handed

hunter? My success would be as sweet for its own sake.

Continuing to listen carefully for signs of occupancy, I continued my way farther and farther into the cave.

The distance may have seemed excessive (which would have been perfectly natural alone in the dark and on strange ground), but I judge I had walked a couple of miles at the very least before I heard the sound of voices. Then I crept on even more cautiously, nor did I hesitate again till the words of the speakers became perfectly audible, though their figures were still hidden by the walls that there made a sudden turn, and behind which they were at work. Not a dozen words had been spoken after I gained position to hear them before I recognized the voices, and it was like a wound to me when I did so.

There were three persons present, I discovered in my patient waiting: the first speaker whose voice betrayed him was Jim Lincque, at which I was not at all surprised after the night in Al's cabin; besides which, I felt sure that little Jim would be equal to anything in the line of law-breaking.

Juletty

That his grandfather, the sanctimonious old moralist, should be capable of thrusting the boy into the way of evil doing was the only surprising point in his connection with the distillery.

The second voice, however, was a startling revelation, for I had certainly deemed the speaker above such duplicity; it was beyond the shadow of a doubt the stentor tone of my temperance friend—Mitch. How the negro had played on my credulity! But I was more amused than indignant at his deception, and laughed to myself as I wondered how “ole Marster’s dawgs” would manage to finish the night’s hunt without his management. The third voice I knew to be that of a negro, by the mellow, yet blunt, utterance, but it was a strange one.

Mitch, with his usual evidence of leadership, seemed to be in command. “Jeems,” he said, and his voice was full of importance and good comradeship—“well, Jeems, we’ll git ’er down ter ther craik, an’ git er off; an’ then ’ats ther last of ther bizness, fer ther boss says now we gotter quit ’stillin’. I ’on’ see whut they-all come ter that insision fer ’nother, kas hit do seem to me ’at we all is shore of makin’ money

In Which the Game is Taken Red-handed

han' over fis'. But still hit is pow'ful pesky ter be allus er sneakin' roun' fer fear somebody 'll foller yer whar yer don' want 'm ter; 'pears ter me I ain' done nothin' but sneak roun' lack er skeered rat fer las' two er three years. An' I ain' never felt right perzackly sartin but whut Al come ter 'is death er tryin' ter stan' Marse Jack off that night uv ther storm. Gawd! 'at wuz er turble spot ter wuk; 'twuz, mon."

Mitch paused in his running fire of talk, as if overwhelmed by the conviction, but he could not keep silent, and in a few minutes began again with more assurance:

"Lemme tell yer some'in! Marse Jack ain' er goin' ter nose roun' hyar ferever 'dout findin out some'in; 'tain't in the blood; ole Marser's granchile done foun' hit out long ergo, cepen he is so in love wid Miss Juletty he cain't see more 'ner inch fum his nose. I heerd jer granpaw say no longer'n yistiddy, 'at Miss Juletty ought ter be settlin' down ennyhow, stid er runnin' half de men in dis county crazy er foller'n' 'er. He lowed ef Miss Juletty 'd settle down, maybe yer granmaw'd speak ter him ergin."

Juletty

At this careless reference to the strained relations of the old people, the party laughed merrily; and there was silence for a time, though I could hear the heavy breathing and motions, as of men who labored; then Mitch spoke: "Take holt, Jerry," he said to the other negro, "an' less git erhaid; thar hain' no use uv us-all er stayin' hyar half de night. Hit'll be late enuff fo' yer git ter yer fust hidin' place ennyhow.

"Jeems, is yer shore that ar boat's ready?"

"Yes, I'm shore," said the boy; "yer ken jes betcher life I always do my part, and don't do no speshial talkin' bout it nother," and Jerry and Jim had the laugh on Mitch, who needs must continually express his feelings. Their reference to outside preparations had recalled to my mind something that had completely passed from it—in fact, had been but carelessly noted at the time.

I had seen, at the entrance of the cave, where it had been securely hidden from the view of the outsider by the curtain of poison ivy, a large flat boat. It was, in fact, a kind of raft, such as were used at that time by dealers in small Kentucky towns for shipping their prod-

In Which the Game is Taken Red-handed

uce, especially tobacco, to the Louisville market. As they continued to talk and lay their plans for the disposal of their illegal goods I drew nearer to them, and finally found myself sufficiently close to see the trio. They stood close to a recess in the wall that answered well the purpose of a large roomy closet, and as I looked, Jerry advanced to this embrasure and stepped up into it, the floor of the closet seeming to be a foot or so higher than the floor of the corridor into which it opened. He turned to one of several barrels that had been stored there, and tilting it to its side, rolled it to the edge of the closet, and, with Jim's assistance, dropped it lightly, spite of its heavy weight, to the main floor. Mitch then rolled the barrel aside, while Jerry and Jim deposited another and another in the corridor, then emerged from the closet, straightened the barrels with their sides toward the mouth of the cave, and Jim gave the word to start.

In another minute each of the three men was rolling toward my hiding place a barrel of what I knew to be illicit liquor; I had been so recently an officer of the law that the knowledge roused my indignation. The office I had

Juletty

held was created for the sole purpose of preventing what those men were doing there in reach of my very hands.

What was I to do?

I certainly had given up my commission, but was it not a plain duty to arrest them and surrender them to justice any way? On the other hand, could I so grieve my love? Could I make public her father's guilt? I knew it would be worse than folly to endeavor to combat the three alone, knowing men in such business were almost sure to be heavily armed.

Not being prepared to act at the moment they reached me, I pressed closely into the niche where the light of their candles—worn after the fashion of miners, in their caps—would not betray my presence, and half wished myself back with the jolly fox hunters.

I stood in my niche and watched them go past, then stepped out and followed them softly.

Once, in the long walk, Jim paused to rest.

"Oh, how I do miss Al," he complained fretfully; "he could er got more uv these barrels off in er night 'an all three uv us kin in er week."

Oh, I thought, it was handling barrels of

In Which the Game is Taken Red-handed

illicit whiskey that developed Al's wonderful muscle; it is small wonder that he was sensitive over being questioned about the matter of his methods.

I remembered a high step at the mouth of the cave, and hoped that the men, in dropping their burdens down this step to the level, would burst one or more.

But luck like that would have been too good, so they dropped them easily enough; but they found more difficulty in loading them onto the boat. No matter how careful they might be, the boat would drift from them and swing out into the current beyond their reach; but, with an oath, Jerry waded out to her stern and held the nose against the bank, while the others loaded readily.

Finally, after storing their load safely in the boat, they returned to the cave for more. I made up my mind to wait till the boat was filled, and then arrest them red-handed, with the liquor ready for market. Knowing any man with or without a marshal's commission would have a right to do this, I followed them throughout the second trip. This time they passed the closet of barrels and went on into a large room

Juletty

which was eminently suited to their purposes—making moonshine whiskey.

In the dim flickering light of the candles I could see clearly the still they had used, and it was by odds the largest I had ever seen. Tin cans, water buckets, gourds, were scattered on the floor or hung about the walls; one arm-chair with rockers showed that some of the operators had not been unmindful of creature comforts. Mitch walked to the still and smoothed its shining sides affectionately.

"You've made many er dollar, but I raikon I'm through 'th you now. We've made our las' gallin, the boss says; ef Al had er lived 'twouldn't er ben so, though. Don' cher-all 'member how we uster come hyar armed tell we foun' out how safte hit wuz? I spec' hit's ben fi' yere sence we had er gun hyar."

Jim grunted; he was too young to enjoy reminiscences. I, however, had gained a pointer that pleased me immensely: the party was unarmed, and I would not have to hurt anybody. Again three barrels were rolled out and loaded into the boat, and the three men stood at her head, absorbed in conversation.

"Now, Jerry, yer know whutcher gotter do?"

In Which the Game is Taken Red-handed

Mitch asked, and then, tapping one palm with a finger of the other hand, he said slowly, as one who repeats a lesson: "De boss says 'at cher gotter paddle down de river uv nights, an' res' an' hide endurin' de day, De boss says yer done made dis trip wid Al so often 'at cher oughtter do it puffec'. Yer knows de man ter 'liver to, an' whenst yer sees him in de city give 'im dis note an' den strike er bee line fer home. Does yer un'erstan', nigger?"

"Aw, yaas, yaas," said Jerry, in no way resenting his title, "I knows des zackly whutter do; I done bin so often wid Al I knows hit all by heart."

"Boss might ez well lemme go along; I doe all work and gits no play, and 'tain't fair," grumbled Jim.

"Never min', Jimmie; yer time's er comin'," said Mitch consolingly; "git erbode, now, an' we'll go down ez fur ez the cornfiel' wid Jerry, an' den we'll cut acrost fer home, an' le' him go erlong 'bout 'is bizness."

Jerry took up his paddles, and the other two stepped onto the boat, but as Jim stooped to push her off I followed them.

They were too much amazed at my ap-

Juletty

pearance to either move or speak, but sat silent and open-mouthed.

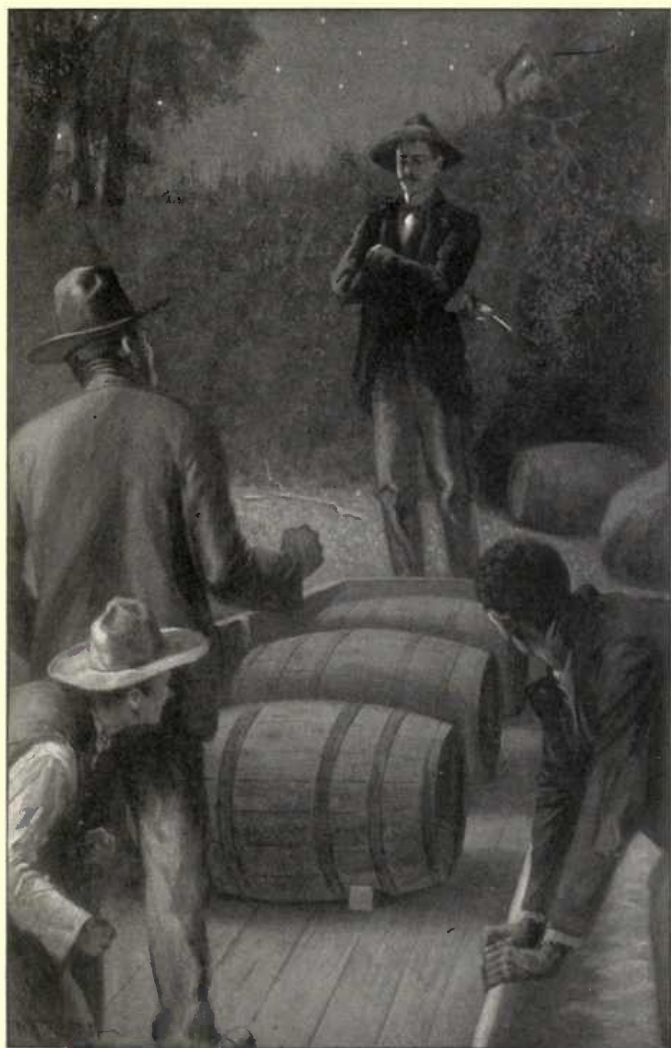
"Mitch," I said, "I am surprised and ashamed to catch you at this kind of work; I did not think you would be capable of doing so wrong a thing. You have known all along that I am a Government officer, and so you certainly know that I cannot allow you to proceed with the sale of this illicit liquor."

"No, sir, dat's er fac', Marse Jack; dat's er fac' sho'; ole Marse's gran'son is pintedly gwinter do 'is juty, I knows. I ben er sayin' all de time dat ef uver yer did fin' us out hit wuz Katy bar de do' wid us; but law, Marse Jack, hain't hit curus yer nuver fin' us out 'long ergo?"

"That will do, Mitch," I said with dignity, and turned to the other negro.

"Jerry, take a plank out of the floor there, and knock in the heads of all these barrels."

He tore up the plank readily enough, but it was to turn and face me threateningly with it. I respected him the more for that one show of fight, but the gleam of my revolver taught them how useless was resistance, and sullenly,



In Which the Game is Taken Red-handed

one by one, the barrels were beaten in, and their contents emptied into the creek.

"Now," I said, "I shall be obliged to have all three of you precede me into the cave for what may be left there."

"I'll be damned ef I do," growled Jim.

"Don't be er fool, Jimmie," said Mitch good-naturedly; "he's got de drop on us, an' we-all 'll haveter do whut he says."

Then he added, half laughing, under his breath, though I as well as the others caught his words:

"But lemme tell yer, mon, when he done foun' out who's de boss uv dis hyar job, dar hain' gwinter be no mo' trouble, sho."

After entering the cave, Mitch loitered till he was almost at my side, and went on talking in the most interested fashion, as if the whole matter were a show and he showman.

"Dar hain' much in dar now, Marse Jack; jes er few barrels uv peach brandy an' some jugs er whiskey. Wait er minnit hyar, Marse Jack; I wanter show yer our little trick."

He stopped beside a step-ladder that almost reached the ceiling, and asked Jim to show me how the thing was done. The boy ran lightly

Juletty

up the steps, lifted his hands and pressed firmly against the ceiling ; it opened, and the moonlight sifted through.

“At’s de way we-all managed ther jug stump, Marse Jack ; Jerry, he jes lived down hyar wid his jugs all ready filled ; an’ yer knows ’bout little Jim, dar, settin’ in his stiddy up erbove ; well, when Jimmie seen er em’ty jug er settin’ on de stump, he jes give er reg’ler mawkin’ bird whistle. Den, yer see, Jerry ’d open dat hole, pull down de jug an’ de money, an’ sot up de whiskey. Aw, hit wuz handy—dez ez handy ez er razzor in er nigger fight. An’ ’twuz safer’n er mad dawg at Chrismus time ; kase, yer see, de holler in de stump kep’ folks fum er seein’ more’n dey oughter see.”

It was simple enough, to be sure.

But I hurried them to the still-room, and gave them not one moment’s rest till still and liquor were utterly destroyed. Then, still keeping them in front of me, and my revolver in my hand, I marched them out into the night.

“I cannot leave my horse,” I said when we stood under the moonlight. “Mitch, I think I can trust you not to run away, so I want you to go up there and bring my horse

In Which the Game is Taken Red-handed

here. He is hitched to the rail fence by Al's cabin."

"Fer Gawd's sake, Marse Jack, don't ax me ter go up dar! Ax me ter give myse'f up ter de sher'ff, ax me ter go lock my own se'f up in de jail, ax me anything 'pon top uv dirt, but don't, Marse Jack, fer Gawd's sake, don't ax me ter go up dar 'mong dem hants!"

"Why, Mitch, you old fool!" I said; but seeing his horror was so real I turned and tried Jerry, with the same results. Jim was equally fervent in his terror, and it resulted in the entire party climbing the slope and going in a body for the horse. Not one of them spoke until we had left the ruined home far behind, and then it was to sigh and thank Heaven for an unlooked-for deliverance. I directed our way across fields straight for old Mr. Lincque's house. I was so indignant with the sanctimonious, oily-tongued lawbreaker that I could scarcely wait to reach him. I had such a longing to face him with these three witnesses of his guilt, taken in the very act of carrying out his instructions, that I rushed my prisoners breathlessly along.

"Whut cher gwinter do wid us-all ter-

Juletty

night, Marse Jack?" asked the irrepressible Mitch.

"I shall take you right to the 'boss,' as you say; and I mean to settle the whole matter, and land you in jail before I sleep," I answered him grimly.

He looked at me curiously, and I fancied he chuckled. "Marse Jack, is yer right plum dead shore yer knows jes zackly who de Boss is?"

"I have no doubt of it," I said.

"Marse Jack," he persisted, "I betcher er jug uv fi'-yer-ole peach brandy, whut I done made myse'f, 'at cher don' know who 'tis."

"No more of your impudence, Mitch."

I could not say whether I felt more proud or humiliated that I had so plainly shown my love for old Lincque's charming daughter that even the negro was sure I would not prosecute her father.

The moonlight was still brilliantly clear though it was far towards morning when we approached the Lincque home.

When we reached the gate the door was opened and Juliet appeared on the threshold; her hand was lifted to her face, and as she peered out she called in an agitated voice:

In Which the Game is Taken Red-handed

"Jim, oh, Jimmie, is that you? ' Have you come at last? Father is dying, and has wanted you so."

"Don't any of you say a word about this matter," I warned my companions; "if Mr. Lincque is really dying we can arrange it afterward."

Then leaving them to do as they pleased, I rode to the door, sprang from my horse, ran up the steps, and asked an explanation of the startling greeting.

CHAPTER XIV

In Which the Distiller Receives a Life
Sentence

CHAPTER XIV

IN WHICH THE DISTILLER RECEIVES A LIFE SENTENCE

AS is usual in cases of serious accident, there was little to tell. A large stallion had escaped from his stable into a pasture of mares and colts; he had succeeded in throwing a young filly to the ground and was killing her with furious blows of his iron-shod hoofs. Mr. Lincque had rescued her, but in the battle with the horse had received a kick in the chest. The injury was to the heart, and his doctor had declared he could not live longer than twenty-four hours.

When I entered the sick-room his wife was bending over him with tenderest ministrations, all the anger of the past forgotten. The old man's face was radiant with gratification; death was not to be dreaded when it brought him back her love.

By the time I had greeted the sufferer and

Juletty

expressed my sympathy the gray of the dawning began to creep into the room, and I persuaded Juliet and her mother, both of whom had kept watch all the night, to leave their patient to me and get a little much-needed rest.

After they left us I suggested to Mr. Lincque that he would do well to follow their example and go to sleep, but he insisted he did not need it, and would rather talk.

"Can I do anything for you?" I asked, noting the wistful look in his dim eyes.

"Nothing," he answered wearily, but almost immediately went on: "There is too much life in this old body of mine to be snuffed out in a minute, Mr. Burton; I may live like this several days. I don't mind dying; life's er tiresome thing at best, but there is one thing that troubles me in going—it's Juletty. I would love ter see her pervided for before I leave her; she's been a mighty good daughter to me. Jeems is all right to do his best and take keer of her, but when I'm not here to tell him what to do, he's no good to look after such a girl. My wife loves her girl, of course, and she would be willing to die for her; but 'tain't

The Distiller Receives a Life Sentence

dying we got to do for people these days—it's living, and that's harder. My wife's kept shut up from the world till she don't know more'n a child unborn about ways and things. Julietty's full of life and frisky as a young colt, and she needs a firm hand on the bit, and that's what her mother will never hold."

He ceased speaking, and I waited, hoping he was only resting and would directly continue; but as he did not, I finally ventured to say, with an effort to suppress a bit of the great eagerness which was welling up in me: "Do you wish to say that it would be a comfort to you to see Juliet and me married here by your bedside before you leave us?"

He looked up, nodded, and stretched his hand to mine. I assured him nothing in the world would more fully meet with my approval.

Then, with an almost childish pleasure, he talked of how he would persuade Juliet to his will, planned the marriage and our future, babbling incessantly until I told him he must keep quiet and go to sleep or he would be unable to carry out his wishes.

"Well," he said, "I will when I have said

Juletty

one thing more. Juliet is a great writer; you never would have reckoned such a thing, would you?"

I could only admit my surprise.

"Well, she is. She's so shy she won't lemme tell it, but there comes papers and books from Louisville every now and then with pieces she wrote in 'em, and she gets a sight of money for 'em, too. I can't see how they afford to pay so much, but Juletty says they just roll in money—the men that makes books and papers. She didn't have to beg 'er start from 'em, either; I borrowed the money from your grandfather and give it to 'er to buy her way, and she did it. And she paid that money back, and she runs this place and takes keer of the whole family. Oh! Juletty is a smart geerl. There's just one thing troubles me about it all, and that is, I know some folks has thought by the way we had money that I was reesponsible for that 'licit still. I reckon, howsomever, when I offered a big reward for the Stiller that quieted 'em. I didn't blame 'em any; they couldn't see how we come by all the money, and Juletty wouldn't tell about the writin'."

The Distiller Receives a Life Sentence

I was indignant, disgusted, angry; how could the man with death already holding him in his grasp lie so unshrinkingly and so utterly? While I wondered, he writhed about so as to look into my face, and with his glazing eyes trying to read my thoughts he asked:

“Mr. Burton, you ain’t never thought that of me, have you?”

Thank God! I was spared the misery of a response to his pitiful appeal for Juliet, white and trembling, glided between us and bent over her father, kissing and fondling him as women do sick men and children.

I left them together and went out upon the lawn, where I paced back and forth, filled with varied thoughts and conjectures, by which I tried to explain to myself the marvellous duplicity of the old man who lay dying within the house. Surely he must know that I held in my hands every proof of his legal sin; why, then, would he continue his efforts to deceive me when he saw they were hopeless? I am ashamed to say that more than once the unwelcome fear thrust itself into my mind—what sort of wife would the daughter of such a man make?

Julietty

Indignant that the thought should even have occurred to me, I put it away, and gladly obeyed the summons to return to the sick-room.

The sufferer had broken much in the hour of my absence, and gray shadows had gathered under his eyes, but he smiled as he placed Juliet's hand in mine and told me of her consent to please him in regard to our marriage. "I am sinking rapidly," he whispered; "it must be to-day."

Juliet pressed my hand and murmured: "We will grant his every wish in the matter, if you please, dear, and not disappoint him in the smallest detail."

The quiet, sad preparations were hastened.

My own and Juliet's nearest relatives were summoned, and soon gathered to witness the solemn ceremony. My personal arrangements were so simple that a half hour before the appointed time I found myself ready, and idly waiting in my room for the lazy hands of my watch to creep to the right minute, when Jim burst in to say his Aunt Juliet wished to speak with me alone, and I hurried down to her.

I had never seen my love so excited, and taking both her hands, I tried to reassure her by

The Distiller Receives a Life Sentence

saying there was nothing to dread—it was like having a tooth out, and would soon be over.

She laughed nervously.

“No, Jack, it is not that ; you do not understand.”

She withdrew her hands, and turning, leaned against the mantel ; my eyes followed her, and lingered lovingly on the back of her creamy neck, caressed by tiny, clinging auburn curls. A curious sensation of having seen just such a neck and just such auburn curls under most peculiar circumstances before, thrilled me.

“Jack, I heard every word father said to you last night, about my writing and my big checks, and all that.”

“Yes, my darling ; but I think he was slightly delirious. I would not allow that to trouble me *now*,” I said comfortingly.

“He thought it was every word true, Jack!”

I gasped at that statement.

“And it is partly true,” she went on ; “I do write, and I do get big checks.”

I had lost my bearings and was helplessly silent.

“James told me all about that raid of yours on the still-cave last night, and how you had

Juletty

destroyed everything, and how he had acknowledged his fault to you ; but, Jack, there is one thing he did not tell, and that is the name of the distiller. You think my father lied to you last night, and it is he who has done all this illicit work, but you are mistaken. You have not found the guilty, but the innocent ! ”

“ Well, well, ” I said soothingly, honoring her effort to defend her father from the stigma of his guilt.

“ I am no longer an officer of the law, so it is no matter to me who the sinner is. ”

“ No longer an officer ! Then you would not be compelled to make arrests though you knew positively the offender ? ”

“ No ; I am under no farther necessity of that sort. ”

I was surprised at her evident disappointment.

Why was she so anxious for justice thus late ?

“ It is like a coward to confess after danger is past, is it not, Jack ? ”

“ No, dear ; it is always brave to confess a wrong, and always cowardly to conceal one. ”

I was ashamed of it, but if she would offer

The Distiller Receives a Life Sentence

another name I would be glad to have the stain removed from my intended wife's father.

"But first I must tell you, I do not think you have been so dreadfully stupid, after all." I winced. "I am sure you would have succeeded in your still-hunt long ago if the stillers had not been thoroughly prepared for you. I was in the little Mount Vernon drug-store the day you were shot, so I knew your business, and laid plans to foil you down here."

"So, so, my lady of the auburn lovelocks, I have you and Juliet both in one," I thought.

"But, Jack," and the sweet voice had taken on a little quaver of appeal, "though father is innocent, some one is guilty. What must be done with that person? There must be some penalty for the one who discovered the cave and arranged for its use, and who conjured up the idea of shipping the horrid stuff on the old raft, and who—well, who in short did everything but the manual labor; that person is guilty, and must be punished. Isn't this true, Jack?"

"Yes, dear, yes; the man who did all that—wilfully and deliberately plotting to defraud his Government—is a criminal, and certainly must suffer for it."

Juletty

Then she threw up her proud little head, and looked at me squarely, with a flash of her Old Bourbon eyes that dried all their tears, and said, with a gleam of defiance :

“Then, Mr. Jack Burton, you may arrest me! You may take me to prison, for I laid every plan, and saw with my own eyes that they were executed properly! I did not think it wrong then, and I do not think so now—I—I——”

But she was interrupted, for I had caught her in my arms, and stopped her mouth with kisses.

I, the virtuous officer, who had almost hesitated to wed the *daughter* of a lawbreaker.

I clasped the real culprit close, and laughed at the thought of her pluck and the wisdom of her plans for evading justice, and revelled in the bravery of her final confession.

I called her a heroine, and my brave little darling, and said how proud I was of her, and how grieved to punish her.

But grieved though I was, there was no escaping it, and I sentenced her to captivity for life—to the man who had raided her 'Licit Still.

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